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John Glayde's Honour

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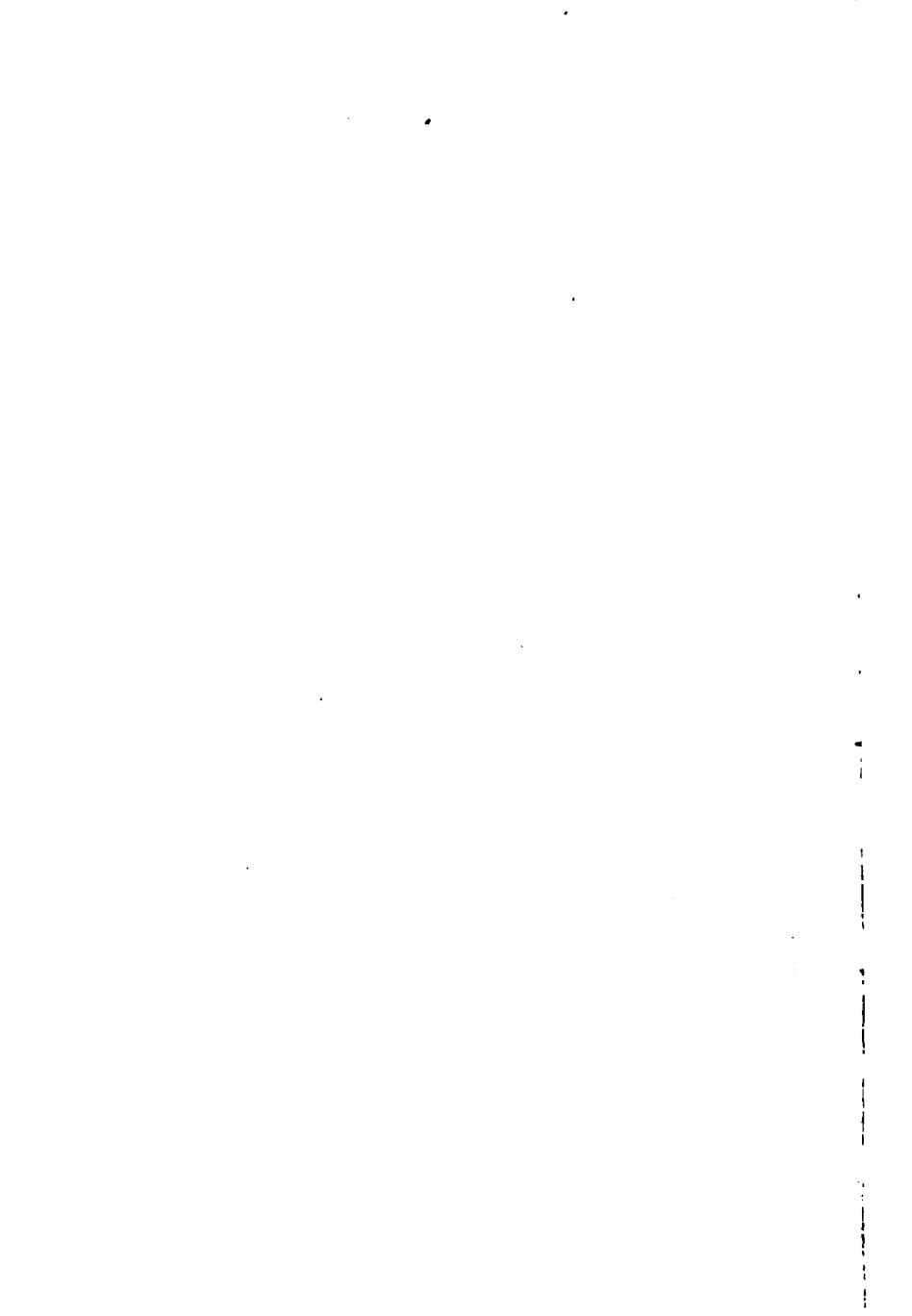
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FRENCH'S STANDARD LIBRARY EDITION

SAMUEL FRENCH, 27-30 West 38th St., New York







JOHN GLAYDE'S HONOUR

A New and Original Play in Four Acts

BY
ALFRED SUTRO

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The following is a copy of the original bill:

ST. JAMES' THEATRE, LONDON

Lessee and Manager, GEORGE ALEXANDER

A New and Original Play in Four Acts by

ALFRED SUTRO

entitled

JOHN GLAYDE'S HONOUR

JOHN GLAYDE.....Mr. George Alexander.
TREVOR LERODE.....Mr. Matheson Lang.
HOWARD COLLINGHAM.....Mr. W. Graham Browne.
CHRISTOPHER BRANLEY.....Mr. Norman Forbes.
MICHAEL SHURMUR.....Mr. Michael Sherbrooke.
WALTERS.....Mr. E. Vivian Reynolds.
MURIEL GLAYDE.....Miss Eva Moore.
PRINCESSE DE CASTAGNARY.....Miss Henrietta Watson.
LADY LERODE.....Miss Helen Ferrers.
MRS. RENNICK.....Miss Gwendolen Floyd.
DORA LONGMAN.....Miss May Martyn.

ACT. I. The dining-room of Mrs. Glayde's flat in the
Avenue du Bois de Boulogne.

ACT II. John Glayde's sitting-room in the Ritz Hotel.

ACT III. Same as Act I.

ACT IV. Trevor Lerode's studio.

Characters.

JOHN GLAYDE.

TREVOR LERODE.

HOWARD COLLINGHAM.

CHRISTOPHER BRANLEY.

MICHAEL SHURMUR.

WALTERS.

MURIEL GLAYDE.

PRINCESSE DE CASTAGNARY.

LADY LERODE.

MRS. RENNICK.

DORA LONGMAN.

*The scene of the play is in Paris, at the present time · and
the action passes within twenty-four hours.*

JOHN GLAYDE'S HONOUR.

"How many a thing which we cast to the ground
When others pick it up becomes a gem?"

MEREDITH.

ACT I.

The dining-room of MRS. GLAYDE'S flat in the Avenue du Bois de Boulogne. It is an exceedingly charming, tasteful room, dainty and delicate. At back is the fireplace; on each side of it large windows, the curtains of which have not been drawn, reveal the trees of the Avenue, with the myriad lights twinkling through. The dinner-table, oblong in shape, is in the full centre of the room. At the head of it, with their backs to the fireplace, are MURIEL and TREVOR LERODE. To the left of TREVOR are the PRINCESS DE CASTAGNARY and HOWARD COLLINGHAM; to the right of MURIEL, CHRISTOPHER BRANLEY and MRS. RENNICK. It is about ten o'clock at night; the illumination is chiefly from the candles on the table.

As the curtain rises the dinner-table has been cleared, and two men are handing round coffee and liqueurs. They go.

BRANLEY. (*leaning back in his chair*) I have dined—I have dined most amazingly well! Mrs. Glayde, I pay you my compliment. That *truite à la nage* was an achievement!

PRINCESS. Bully!

BRANLEY. (*with a mock bow*) I thank you,

Princess, for that exquisite Americanism! I am a man who has known what it is to dine badly, not to dine at all; and rarely—ah, very rarely!—to dine well. To-night I have dined amazingly well. Homage to Mrs. Glayde!

MURIEL. (*laughing*) Eloquent Mr. Branley!

BRANLEY. Madam, your *chef* is an artist—I embrace him—I crown him with parsley! Thanks to him, I feel inspired. Were Velasquez here, I would clap him on the shoulder and call him brother!

PRINCESS. (*lighting a cigarette*) That's enough, Christopher. Try some soda-water.

BRANLEY. A person came into my studio this afternoon, and haggled for a picture. I told him I'd let him know. I shall decline.

MRS. RENNICK. And why?

BRANLEY. He had a raucous voice, and squinted—he is not the man to possess my masterpieces. By that gorgeous purple trout, he shall not—no!

PRINCESS. You don't often get a chance to sell a picture, Christopher. And the people who *don't* squint aren't running after 'em.

BRANLEY. Princess, you drag me to earth—respect my wings! Mrs. Rennick (*he turns to her*), give me an appropriate sentiment—in Greek!

COLLINGHAM. (*looking enquiringly at her*) Greek?

MRS. RENNICK. (*laughing*) Yes—I'm learning. The age of the passions is past—so I study Greek!

PRINCESS. Rather a dismal alternative, isn't it?

MRS. RENNICK. (*shrugging*) One does what one can. But oughtn't we to drink to the new flat? Mr. Collingham!

(*She turns to him.*)

COLLINGHAM. Yes—a toast! (*he rises*) Mrs. Glayde, I lift my glass—to your new home—and its most gracious mistress!

BRANLEY. Tsch, tsch—commonplace! (*he rises, followed by the others, except MURIEL, who leans back and laughs*) To the wild, capricious, sparkling, storm-tossed sea, from which Venus Aphrodite Muriel Glayde arose, on her conch-shell, in the Bois de Boulogne! [*He empties his glass.*]

PRINCESS. To Muriel, best of pals!

MRS. RENNICK. To Muriel!

MURIEL. (*turning to TREVOR*) And you, Trevor?

TREVOR. (*warmly*) To the sweetest of hostesses, dearest of friends—the most glorious of women!

(*They all empty their glasses, then sit. MURIEL gives TREVOR the softest of glances; and, for a moment, lets her hand rest on his.*)

BRANLEY. (*shaking his head in solemn disapproval*) Sweetest, dearest, most glorious! From a painter-poet I should have expected subtler adjectives.

TREVOR. (*laughing*) You bubble, Chris, and babble——

BRANLEY. See how he plays upon words, and jingles vowels! Trifler, was there not also “bauble,” which led you pleasantly to “bible,” and thence to——

PRINCESS. (*breaking in*) Don't talk of bibles, please. I was religiously brought up.

BRANLEY. In Chicago—where they feed the pigs on old sermons, to give sanctimonious flavour to the pork! (*he turns, with a large gesture, to the window.*) See the good lights of old Paris twinkling in the distance! Beautiful home of Art and Lovers, Paris, I salute thee! (*To COLLINGHAM*) Collingham, the phrase is not copyright. Let it appear to-morrow, in the column you send to the wonderful London ha'porth!

MURIEL. We've scarcely heard your voice all the evening, Mr. Collingham.

COLLINGHAM. Branley doesn't give one very much chance! And—well, the fact is, I've some rather bad news, Mrs. Glayde. Do you know that they say your husband's ill?

MURIEL. (*quickly*) No—really? Where have you heard that?

COLLINGHAM. It was cabled over from New York. Mr. Glayde had been confined to his room for a week.

BRANLEY. (*filling his glass*) Ill-mannered man, to mention husbands here!

PRINCESS. (*with a grimace*) Nasty things!

MURIEL. Mr. Glayde would have cabled me if he had been really unwell. It will only be a little game of his.

MRS. RENNICK. (*wondering*) A game?

MURIEL. The report that he is ill sends markets down; there are times when he *likes* them to go down.

PRINCESS. (*admiringly*) Oh, he's full of dodges, is the Iron King!

BRANLEY. The Iron King? Who's that?

PRINCESS. Why, John Glayde, of course—Muriel's husband. Didn't you know?

BRANLEY. How should I? Husbands don't interest me, as a rule——

MRS. RENNICK. (*clapping her hands*) John Glayde, the Iron King! Oh, it's fine! He's a great man, then, Muriel?

MURIEL. (*quietly*) He, and half a dozen others, run America.

BRANLEY. "Run America"—the pretty image! Can't you see America skipping, while John Glayde, and our Princess's father, and a few other traffickers in steel and oil and copper, hold the ropes? Jump, America! Higher, America! And America pants, breathless!

PRINCESS. Have you heard from him lately, Muriel?

MURIEL. (*laughing*) Oh, he's much too busy to write! I've been away six months—and I believe we've exchanged four letters!

BRANLEY. (*to* MRS. RENNICK) Think of it, student of Greek! Give me an irregular verb—to describe his conduct!

PRINCESS. (*slyly*) Muriel doesn't break her heart over it—does she, Trevor?

TREVOR. (*coldly*) How can I tell? She doesn't wear it on the sleeve next to me. Where's *your* husband to-night, Betsy?

PRINCESS. (*indifferently*) He's either gambling or tipping.

BRANLEY. Or protecting the choreographic arts. We've put him on an allowance.

PRINCESS. (*sternly*) We?

BRANLEY. (*bowing low*) Our friends are acquainted with the fact, most noble Princess, that you have deigned to admit me to your counsels—to blend your inexperience of men with my most subtle knowledge. Oh, the bad deal that the respectable Mr. Huggins made, when he bartered beautiful Betsy for the Prince's coronet!

PRINCESS. And Poppa knew something about pigs, too.

BRANLEY. Also why marry an Italian Prince—ling, when America has kings like Mr. Glayde?

MURIEL. (*dryly*) Don't bother about my husband, please, Mr. Branley.

MRS. RENNICK. (*laughing*) I had quite forgotten that you *had* a husband, Muriel!

MURIEL. I have to pinch myself, sometimes, to remember! I've scarcely seen him, these last two or three years.

MRS. RENNICK. Really!

MURIEL. You see, he works eighteen hours a day—he does nothing but work. At home, from the first thing in the morning till the last thing at night, he's at his office, working. It has happened more

than once, when we're living under the same roof, that I haven't seen him for a week at a time!

PRINCESS. *I call that fine!*

MURIEL. And then he's always running off to Chicago, or St. Louis, or somewhere—he'll go at a moment's notice. He spends his life crushing something, or fighting someone—smashing an old enterprise, or starting a new one. He's so rich that it takes a dozen clerks merely to count his money—but he's always wanting more!

PRINCESS. He gives away a lot.

MURIEL. Oh yes—millions! Schools, universities, hospitals—there he's a prince! And, more than once, when he has fought a man, and beaten him to pulp, Mr. Glayde has sent him a nice big cheque, to let him start over again!

MRS. RENNICK. Oh, isn't that generous!

BRANLEY. Wonderful! I wish he were here!

TREVOR. (*angrily*) Chris!

BRANLEY. I do, Trevor, I do! I'd get him to make a corner in Art—in me! There are canvases in my studio!

(*He fills his glass.*)

PRINCESS. It's not overwork *you* are suffering from, Mr. Branley!

BRANLEY. (*meekly*) Princess, reproach me not! This is my sentimental hour!

MRS. RENNICK. (*to TREVOR*) How's Muriel's portrait getting on, Mr. Lerode?

TREVOR. Nearly finished now—a few more sittings—

PRINCESS. (*maliciously*) You've been a long time over it, Trevor!

TREVOR. (*awkwardly*) A long time—I don't know—an artist isn't a bricklayer—he doesn't work by the hour! And I aim at something fine—with *such* a sitter! (*he looks ardently at MURIEL*) I want to paint a real portrait—give the *real* Muriel

—there's not only the beautiful face—I want to show the soul!

BRANLEY. (*sipping his glass*) It was not till 595 A. D. that the Pope allowed that women *did* have souls.

TREVOR. Shut up, Chris! (*to MRS. RENNICK*) You've no idea how difficult it is to satisfy oneself. I've painted the whole thing out twice, and begun again—

BRANLEY. Penelope's web!

PRINCESS. (*laughing maliciously*) Muriel's very patient.

MURIEL. (*anxious to change the conversation*) Mr. Collingham, please don't look so bored. I believe you only come here to see Dora. I shall really have to send that child home, you know. She talks of nothing but you!

PRINCESS. Where *is* Dora this evening, Muriel?

MURIEL. Lady Lerode has taken her to the theatre—they're doing *Antigone* at the Français. But cheer up, Mr. Collingham—they'll be back soon!

MRS. RENNICK. (*shaking her head*) I'm not at all sure that, if Dora were *my* niece, I'd let her see so much of Mr. Collingham.

COLLINGHAM. (*turning to her*) And why, dear Lady Cato?

MRS. RENNICK. Now that's unkind, Mr. Collingham—I'm not eighty yet! But Dora's very impressionable; and you are—altogether too nice!

MURIEL. (*laughing*) You think that, Helen? Well, perhaps you're right—we'll see! And now, good people, you must make yourselves happy here—I can't take you to the drawing-room, for it's not furnished yet. Tell me, though—*isn't* it a pretty flat?

PRINCESS. (*looking around*) I call it just lovely!

MURIEL. It's *such* a relief to be away from the

hotel! All sorts of people were forever calling on me, and wanting to talk to me, because I was Mrs. Glayde!

BRANLEY. The penance of queenship! But tell me, your Majesty, does your royal husband own *all* the iron in America?

MURIEL. He's the head of the Trust that controls it. But it's not only iron—it's coal, and steel, and oil, and tobacco—he's in them all, he's in everything! Over there, one eats John Glayde, and drinks him; lights *his* cigarette with *his* matches as one leaves *his* hotel to go on board *his* train!

BRANLEY. The magnificent man! Columbus only discovered America—he swallows it! Well, here's to him—and wishing him a good digestion!

(He raises his glass; a Footman enters hurriedly, and whispers to MURIEL. She rises in great agitation.)

MURIEL. *(to the Footman)* What!!! *(she turns to the others)* My husband has come!

(There is a general stir. The guests all rise, except BRANLEY, who quietly finishes his glass. TREVOR stands, as though thunderstruck; the PRINCESS deftly pulls him to her side, causing him to vacate the place next to MURIEL. JOHN GLAYDE comes smilingly into the room. He is in immaculate evening dress, and looks pleasant and handsome.)

MURIEL. John!

JOHN. My dear Muriel! *(he kisses her lightly on the brow)* Ten thousand apologies for bursting in on you like this!

MURIEL. You've dined, John?

JOHN. Oh yes—hours ago—in the train.

MURIEL. Let me introduce my friends—the Princess de Castagnary—

BRANLEY. (*complacently, still seated*) Née Betsy Huggins.

PRINCESS. (*holding out her hand, which JOHN takes*) We've met before, Mr. Glayde!

JOHN. Surely, surely!

(*They shake hands.*)

MURIEL. Mrs. Rennick——

BRANLEY. Ζωή μου σὰς ἀγαπῶ——

MURIEL. Mr. Howard Collingham——

BRANLEY. Of the Press Gang.

MURIEL. Mr. Christopher Branley.

BRANLEY. (*rising solemnly to his feet*) A humble artist, sir, before dinner—a genius now.

(*He bows low.*)

MURIEL. Mr. Trevor Lerode.

(*John has bowed and smiled pleasantly to the others; he turns at the mention of LERODE'S name, and looks searchingly at him. They all sit: JOHN in the place before occupied by TREVOR, who is now at the side of the PRINCESS. MURIEL and TREVOR are nervous and excited, JOHN absolutely calm and unruffled.*)

JOHN. Now let me explain, first of all, how it is that I have entered in this thunderbolt fashion. (*to MURIEL*) You may have heard that I was ill?

MURIEL. Mr. Collingham was just telling me of a report in the papers——

JOHN. (*smiling*) I allowed New York to believe that I was suffering from—measles! The fact is that a week ago I had a sudden feeling that I wanted a holiday, and would like to see my wife. But I happened to be engaged in a little financial conflict with various gentlemen over there, of whom your father, Princess, is one——

PRINCESS. Poor Poppa!

JOHN. And it wouldn't have done for me to let my intentions get abroad—when the cat's away, you know! I couldn't even cable—for my name, unfortunately, is familiar to the young ladies at the telegraph office, and it would quickly have leaked out that I was gone—to my distinct prejudice. So I had no option—but to arrive—like this.

MURIEL. You've only just come?

JOHN. We landed at Cherbourg at three. I wired you from there—but of course to the hotel.

MURIEL. Oh yes—I've only been here five days. A sudden determination—I saw this flat, and fell in love with it. I wrote you, of course. And I wouldn't leave my address at the hotel, because people pestered me so! I send every day for letters. How *did* you find out where I was?

JOHN. The invaluable Shurmur discovered that, while I was dressing at Ritz's.

MURIEL. (*with vague uneasiness*) Shurmur? Ah—he is with you?

JOHN. You know I never travel without Shurmur! (*to the others*) A man who is half secretary and half watchdog, with something of Indian blood in him, I fancy, that makes him delight in nosing a trail! But this time the task was not very difficult, it seems.

BRANLEY. Mr. Glayde, I feel like Aladdin with the wonderful lamp—I was yearning to see you. Your wife had just been telling us of your achievements.

JOHN. (*smiling*) Which probably do not commend themselves to you! I'm by way of being an organizer, you know, and like handling brains—in bulk. (*he turns to COLLINGHAM*) You gentlemen, I presume, are all connected with the arts?

COLLINGHAM. Mr. Lerode and Mr. Branley are both painters——

BRANLEY. And *such* painters!

COLLINGHAM. I am only a journalist. (*he*

laughs) Oh, don't be afraid—I'm not suggesting an interview!

MRS. RENNICK. Mr. Lerode is painting Muriel's portrait.

JOHN. (*turning full on TREVOR, but smiling pleasantly*) Indeed?

TREVOR. (*coldly*) Mrs. Glayde has been good enough to sit to me.

JOHN. Ah . . . I shall look forward to seeing the portrait . . . Where's Dora, Muriel? Gone to bed, I suppose?

MURIEL. No—she's at the theatre with Lady Lerode—Mr. Lerode's mother. But they'll be here soon. Will you have some coffee, John?

JOHN. (*smiling*) At this hour? No, thanks. But Mr. Collingham will perhaps pass me a cigarette. I see that you ladies permit. (*COLLINGHAM passes the box; he takes a cigarette and lights it*) Thank you. Well, it's pleasant to be on terra-firma again. We had a rough crossing!

BRANLEY. Was your ironic Majesty ill?

JOHN. (*coldly*) I beg your pardon?

BRANLEY. (*deprecatingly*) Sir, I meant no offence. The truth is, the title appeals to me. I would like to be king of something, though it were but of rushlights!

PRINCESS. (*rising*) I guess you and Muriel would like to be alone. Now, Mr. Glayde, if you ruin my Poppa, I'll be very annoyed!

JOHN. (*smiling*) He shall be left with a dollar or two, Princess, for your sake!

PRINCESS. I warn you that I'll go straight to the telegraph office, and cable him that you're here!

JOHN. I mean to do a little cabling on my own account. And let's hope that Mr. Huggins will very soon be regretting that it *wasn't* measles!

PRINCESS. (*with a mock grimace*) Unpleasant man! Well, good-bye. I won't invite you to meet my Prince, because I'm not proud of him!

*(They shake hands—the PRINCESS goes to MURIEL—
—all have risen.)*

BRANLEY. I'll see you to your carriage, Betsy.
(he catches JOHN'S look of surprise) Er—Princess.
(he shakes hands with MURIEL) Mrs. Glayde, I shall never forget that *truite à la nage!*
He goes to JOHN and shakes hands with him)
Good-bye, Mr. Glayde. *(he holds his hand to the light)* Not even a miserable million sticking to it!
Are you coming, Trevor?

TREVOR. Yes. *(he shakes hands with MURIEL)*
I suppose you won't be able to sit to me to-morrow?

MURIEL. *(quietly)* No—not to-morrow, perhaps—but I hope the next day. I'll let you know.

TREVOR. Do. Good-bye, Mr. Glayde.

JOHN. Good-bye.

(They bow stiffly, JOHN looking him squarely in the face: TREVOR meets his gaze unflinchingly.)

MRS. RENNICK. *(kissing MURIEL)* A delightful evening!

MURIEL. Don't forget you're coming to tea to-morrow!

MRS. RENNICK. Oh no! *(she turns to JOHN)*
Good-bye, Mr. Glayde.

JOHN. Good-bye.

PRINCESS. *(at the door, with TREVOR and BRANLEY)* I'll drive you, if you like, Mrs. Rennick.

MRS. RENNICK. Oh, that's awfully good of you!
(at the door) I never feel safe in those nasty cabs!

BRANLEY. *(at the door)* You have the resource of conjugating *τίναγμα* to the cabman!

(They go. COLLINGHAM has moved with outstretched hand to MURIEL.)

MURIEL. Oh, Mr. Collingham, don't go—stay and see Dora! She'll be so disappointed! John——
(she turns laughingly to him) I must warn you that Dora's hopelessly in love with Mr. Collingham!

JOHN. (*pleasantly, as he lights another cigarette*) Really? Well, he seems a white man.

COLLINGHAM. (*smiling*) I'm glad you think so! You make up your mind quickly, Mr. Glayde?

JOHN. It's my business to know men.

COLLINGHAM. And women?

JOHN. Ah, there—my experience is too limited! . . . When do you expect Dora back, Muriel?

MURIEL. (*glancing at the clock*) It's a quarter to twelve—they'll be here in a minute or two.

(*She moves restlessly on to the balcony, and leans out. JOHN bends over to COLLINGHAM, speaking earnestly and incisively, with an entire change of manner.*)

JOHN. Will you call on me at Ritz's to-morrow, at eleven?

COLLINGHAM. (*staring*) If you wish it—certainly.

JOHN. At eleven sharp?

COLLINGHAM. Yes.

JOHN. Thank you. (*he turns, and raises his voice*) Muriel, won't you catch cold? (*MURIEL starts, leaves the balcony, and comes into the room; he rises, and moves to her*) Do you know, it's nearly seven months since I saw you?

MURIEL. (*indifferently, as she sits beside COLLINGHAM*) Really? But then we never see much of each other, do we?

JOHN. (*standing with his back to the fireplace*) I accept the reproach, meekly. (*to COLLINGHAM*) Your business-men over here, I suppose, Mr. Collingham, go out in the morning, somewhere about ten, after a substantial breakfast, and return home in time for dinner, and spend the evening happily with their families?

COLLINGHAM. (*smiling*) More or less.

JOHN. Well, with us, you see, there's no such

thing as regular office hours. We work all the time. In England a rich man's ambition is to become a peer, mix with county families, and forget that he ever was connected with trade. In America we want power, and then more power—the thing becomes a habit: we go on, because we must. I daresay I look an old man to you—but I'm only forty. I began young.

COLLINGHAM. You've liked it?

JOHN. One enjoys the fight—brain against brain—it's chess on a rather big scale. But I'm going to retire—and turn over a new leaf! (to MURIEL, *who had scarcely been listening*) Muriel, do you hear that? I intend to devote the remaining years of my life to pleasing you, and being with you.

MURIEL. (*coldly*) Indeed?

JOHN. A fact, I assure you! I intend to resign my ironic kingdom, as your facetious friend calls it, and become a private citizen again. And I've an idea we'll buy some automobiles, and do Italy together!

MURIEL. (*shifting in her chair*) This isn't the time of year for Italy.

JOHN. (*lightly*) If it's too hot in Italy we'll try Sweden or Norway—or hire a ragged regiment, perhaps, and do some camping out in the desert! What do you say? (LADY LERODE and DORA come in) Ah, Dora!

(DORA, a pretty girl of seventeen, rushes excitedly to him, and flings her arms round his neck.

MURIEL goes to LADY LERODE.)

DORA. Uncle John, Uncle John! Oh, I am glad to see you!

JOHN. (*fondly, stroking her hair*) Well, Doffy, my little girl—how are you?

DORA. Oh, what a lovely surprise! Lovely—that's what it is—just lovely!

MURIEL. John, let me introduce you to Lady Lerode. (*to LADY LERODE*) My husband.

LADY LERODE. (*going to him with outstretched hands*) Delighted to welcome you over here, Mr. Glayde!

JOHN. (*shaking hands with her*) Thank you. Very good of you to take my little Dora to the theatre. Did you enjoy yourself, Dora?

DORA. (*hesitating*) Well, I mustn't say "no," because Lady Lerode took me. But, uncle, the theatres here *are* so dull! It's all blank verse—they make love in blank verse—fancy! and kill each other in blank verse—it's *very* stupid!

COLLINGHAM. (*laughing*) Dora evidently doesn't care for the classical drama!

DORA. (*coolly, over JOHN's shoulder*) Oh, Mr. Collingham, are *you* there? (*to JOHN*) They won't take me to the really *nice* theatres, uncle, because they say I'm too young—so I only go to the old-fogey places. But now that *you're* here, you'll show me something of life, won't you? (*she peers into his face*) Uncle John, you're not looking well!

JOHN. (*smiling*) No?

DORA. There's a line there, right across your forehead. Take it away, Uncle John!

JOHN. Give me another kiss—that will do it!

(MURIEL is talking at back to COLLINGHAM and LADY LERODE; LADY LERODE leaves the others, and comes to JOHN and DORA.)

LADY LERODE. (*gaily*) Dora, your Mr. Collingham's going!

DORA. Oh! (*she leaves JOHN, and goes quickly to the others.*)

LADY LERODE. (*going close to JOHN, and whispering eagerly to him*) You've not breathed a word, of course, about *my* having cabled you?

JOHN. No. But why *did* you cable?

LADY LERODE. (*hastily*) Not now—I can't tell

you now. Oh, nothing serious, of course—the merest trifle! But you'll be wanting to see me. When? You'd better not call on me.

JOHN. At Ritz's to-morrow?

LADY LERODE. (*surprised*) You're staying at Ritz's?

JOHN. (*shortly*) I've engaged rooms there.

LADY LERODE. Shall we say at twelve? Will that do?

JOHN. Perfectly.

LADY LERODE. I'll be there. (*she giggles*) Very compromising! (*anxiously*) And, of course—not a word—

JOHN. (*quietly*) That goes without saying.

LADY LERODE. (*raising her voice to ordinary conversational tones*) Well, good-bye, Mr. Glayde—you and Muriel must dine with us—you will, won't you? (*he bows—they shake hands—she goes to MURIEL*) Good-bye, Muriel, my dear—I'm so glad to have seen your husband!

COLLINGHAM. (*shaking hands with DORA.*) Good-bye, Dora.

DORA. (*eagerly*) Isn't he fine—don't you just love him? (*in a whisper*) Have you spoken to him yet—about me?

COLLINGHAM. (*laughing*) Heavens! He'd send you to boarding-school! (*she makes a face at him; he laughs, pulls her hair, and goes to JOHN, who has been standing, quietly, looking at MURIEL and LADY LERODE*) Good-bye, Mr. Glayde.

JOHN. Good-bye.

LADY LERODE. (*shaking hands with MURIEL*) Nothing, thanks, really—I *must* get home! Oh, Muriel, I *do* hope Mr. Glayde will like Trevor's portrait—don't you? It's very impressionist, of course—but the dear boy is so clever! Well—*au revoir!*

JOHN. (*stepping forward*) I'll see you to your carriage.

LADY LERODE. Oh, please! Mr. Collingham will do that!

JOHN. At least I'll escort you to the elevator—I beg your pardon—lift!

(JOHN, LADY LERODE, and COLLINGHAM go; MURIEL sits, wearily. DORA runs to her and nestles on the arm of her chair.)

DORA. How lovely to have Uncle John here again! Isn't it, auntie?

MURIEL. (*who is staring straight before her, twisting her flowers*) Of course.

DORA. He's not looking well, Auntie: you must be *very* nice to him. Auntie, do you know, when he's there, all the other men seem to have grown quite small, except Mr. Collingham. Auntie, you'll say a word for me and Howard, won't you? Auntie, am I too young, do you think?

MURIEL. (*wearily*) Of course. You're only a school-girl.

DORA. (*pouting*) I'm seventeen. All the queens in the history books get married much younger than that.

MURIEL. (*fretfully*) But you're *not* a queen! Don't be silly, Dora, there's a dear child! And don't worry me now—my head aches.

(JOHN comes back.)

JOHN. You've a headache, Muriel? I'm sorry.

MURIEL. Oh, it's nothing.

JOHN. Now, Dora, little girl, bedtime! Why, you ought to have been in bed hours ago!

DORA. Uncle! I've *such* a lot to say to you!

JOHN. (*laughing*) It will keep! Good-night, little girl!

DORA. (*kissing him*) That line's still there, you know! Smooth it away, uncle dear! (*she peers into his face: JOHN smiles at her*) That's better! (*she goes to MURIEL*) Good-night, Auntie! (*she kisses her*) Oh, I am so glad Uncle John's

back! Perhaps we shan't see so much of Mr. Lerode now!

(She trips off.)

MURIEL. *(biting her lip)* The silly girl!

JOHN. *(carelessly)* She doesn't seem to like Mr. Lerode?

MURIEL. She has eyes only for Mr. Collingham. You're sure you want nothing, John?

JOHN. Oh, nothing, thanks—nothing at all. . . .
(he rises) Well, Muriel, let me have a look at you. . . . What a long time you've been away!

MURIEL. *(dryly)* Only six months.

JOHN. *Only* six months! It has seemed six years to me!

MURIEL. That's rather sudden, isn't it?

JOHN. *(humbly)* Don't be hard on me, Muriel. I told you I meant to turn over a new leaf. And I will!

MURIEL. You've said that before, more than once.

JOHN. I have, of course. But, this time—well, I had a twinge, a month ago, somewhere about the heart. Bad pain for a quarter of an hour—and the doctors shook their heads. Constitution of iron, they told me—but it seems I was killing myself. Rest imperative, they said—absolute rest—and I could live to a hundred. Well, I rather mean to.

MURIEL. That's wise.

JOHN. I've been quietly getting out of things since then—it's a pity old Huggins, and Marland, and Corby just selected last week for a grand attack on me—all down the line! And it may cost me a million or two. But it shows I'm in earnest, doesn't it, to have left the field like this?

MURIEL. You've lots of millions.

JOHN. Lots! And they haven't done much for us so far, have they? But they're going to.

MURIEL. How?

JOHN. Well, to begin with, we'll have a good time. And then we'll let one or two other people have a good time. There's much to be done, isn't there? And I'll forget all about business—you shall take me to concerts, show me pictures, we'll waltz off to Italy——

MURIEL. (*breaking in*) My dear John, you *are* such a hurricane! I've been in Paris six months—you suddenly arrive and want to carry me off——

JOHN. You don't seem very glad to see me, Muriel!

MURIEL. You're not going to be sentimental, John? I've had four letters from you in those six months.

JOHN. I can't write letters, unfortunately—I've lost the habit! But I've *felt* a great deal. If you knew!

MURIEL. (*with a little touch of satire*) There hasn't been much sentiment in our life these past few years!

JOHN. No, there hasn't. And it has all been my fault—I know that.

MURIEL. It wasn't to please *me*, or because *I* wished it, that you tied yourself to your desk.

JOHN. My dear Muriel, on the steamer, coming across, I've said that to myself, again and again. I realize how much I've neglected you. All I can say is that I'm sorry, and mean to mend.

MURIEL. As I've told you, it's rather sudden. You've become almost a stranger to me.

JOHN. (*moving a little closer to her*) Deal gently with me, Muriel!

MURIEL. (*mechanically withdrawing from him*) You'd like me to be frank and honest, wouldn't you? I could almost count the days that I've seen you, these past two years——

JOHN. (*dropping his head*) Yes—I suppose that's a fact. One doesn't realize it, of course. Having no children, somehow, made a great differ-

ence to me. I never spoke of it . . . But I threw myself into things. One gets caught in the whirlpool.

MURIEL. And now you come to-night, like a bolt from the blue, and say, let's do this, let's do that, as though we were going off on our honeymoon——

JOHN. (*eagerly*) Why not?

MURIEL. (*pettishly*) Oh, John, don't be absurd! I'm not a railroad, for which you can sign a cheque!

JOHN. You're my wife.

MURIEL. I'm your wife, of course—merely a woman. But even a woman has to be considered a little, I think.

JOHN. (*humbly*) If you knew how full of consideration I am!

MURIEL. (*with a movement*) Well, you don't show it! I resent being hustled like this, and ordered about, and told I must pack up my trunks and rush off to Italy——

JOHN. I'm sorry, Muriel. That's not what I meant.

MURIEL. That's what you said.

JOHN. I only want . . . a little . . . sympathy, Muriel . . .

MURIEL. (*with a half laugh*) Then, my dear John, you must—deserve it! Let me get used to you again! I'm glad to have seen you, of course——

JOHN. You'd say that to your doctor, or lawyer.

MURIEL. I'm glad to have seen you—and, as for the rest——(*with a sudden flash of anger*) Oh, it's so like a man, to rush into a woman's life, after having absolutely neglected her for years, and then want her to take things up, exactly as they were when he left them!

JOHN. (*gently*) Muriel, I've told you——

MURIEL. (*breaking in, eagerly*) You've told me that you were caught in the whirlpool, as you call it, and to you that justifies all. But what was I doing, do you imagine, all that time? Did you

ever stop to think how empty and dreary *my* life was?

JOHN. You had all you wanted, Muriel.

MURIEL. (*scornfully*) Diamonds, horses, motor-cars! You thought *they* were enough!

JOHN. You were proud of me, though? When I used to come and tell you——

MURIEL. I was proud of your cleverness, of course. But I wanted more than that.

JOHN. You never told me—you never complained——

MURIEL. I am not the sort of woman to go on her knees to her husband, begging for his love, when he has ceased to care for her.

JOHN. (*eagerly*) That's not true, Muriel!

MURIEL. If it isn't, it looked like it. And how was I to know? When I asked you to come away with me, spend an evening at home—there was a mine, or a tramway, or some new Trust. Love! that died years ago—you killed it—with your millions!

JOHN. (*pleading*) Muriel!

MURIEL. (*looking straight before her*) The loneliness of it, in that big empty house—oh, the loneliness! I had no children, either . . . You went your way . . .

JOHN. Yes, I've been a fool! But, Muriel—have you forgotten how happy we were, at the start, in our little flat at the Adelaide——

MURIEL. (*leaning back*) With the old Irish servant . . .

JOHN. (*eagerly*) I'm glad you remember those times!

MURIEL. (*shaking her head*) I remember them as one remembers a dream. It's so long ago!

JOHN. Only twelve years.

MURIEL. Twelve years—a life-time! I was nineteen then—nineteen! No, my dear John, let's be sensible. We two are very good friends——

JOHN. (*wistfully*) Only friends—nothing more? Muriel?

(*He tries to take her hand, but she laughingly evades him.*)

MURIEL. You'll have to begin your courting all over again! (*she rises*) And now I must really go to bed—I'm dreadfully tired. I'm sorry I've no spare room to offer you—but you see I've only furnished half the flat so far—

JOHN. (*who has risen with her*) Don't bother about that—I'll bivouac here on the sofa—I'm an old campaigner.

MURIEL. You'd do better to go back to the hotel, I fancy—but that's as you like. And, if you want anything, one of the men is still up. So good-night. (*she holds out her hand.*)

JOHN. (*taking it, and drawing her a little towards him*) Muriel, you say I must begin my courting all over again—

MURIEL. (*nodding*) Yes. And you must, too.

JOHN. (*with an anxiety that he cannot repress*) Is your heart . . . as free . . . as it was . . . in those days when . . .

MURIEL. (*taking her hand away and forcing a laugh*) Now, John, what a silly question! I'm an old woman—I'm thirty-one! Do you take me for a romantic school-girl? Whom do you think I'm in love with?

JOHN. (*hesitating*) Well—I don't know—from what you've been saying—there seems no reason—why you—shouldn't be—

MURIEL. (*merrily*) Except the very trifling one that I'm your wife! Have you forgotten that again?

JOHN. (*with deep earnestness*) You've been very frank and sincere with me so far, Muriel—I hope you'll continue to be so—

MURIEL. (*facing him squarely*) Now what do you mean?

JOHN. I've neglected you all these years—I have, it's quite true—I've been very unwise, very wrong—the blame's all mine—I realize that.—If——

(*He pauses.*)

MURIEL. (*still maintaining her cheerful tone*) If what?

JOHN. (*with great difficulty*) If—some other man—had taken my place—in your heart——

MURIEL. (*with a nervous laugh, that she strives in vain to make seem spontaneous*) My dear John!

JOHN. The fault would be mine—mine—and not—yours.

MURIEL. You seem very anxious that there *should* be someone! What a pity there isn't!

JOHN. (*looking into her eyes*) There isn't?

MURIEL. (*merrily*) My dear John! why do you turn that inquisitor's gaze on me? Oh, I see! (*she claps her hands*) That silly little Dora spoke of Mr. Lerode coming so often! Perhaps you're jealous of Mr. Lerode! Oh, do tell!

JOHN. I don't like him.

MURIEL. (*dryly*) Did any husband *ever* like the man his wife does? Because I *do* like him, of course—very much. He and his mother are great friends of mine.

JOHN. And does Lady Lerode——

(*He pauses.*)

MURIEL. What?

JOHN. Does Lady Lerode—approve of—your friendship?

MURIEL. (*laughing heartily*) My dear John! Oh, you are lovely! Approve of our friendship! That's splendid, really! Why, she's almost as much a friend of mine as he is!

JOHN. It's *he* who is painting your portrait, though, isn't it?

MURIEL. Of course. He's a great artist. You shall begin your new career by buying one of his pictures.

JOHN. (*slowly*) I don't like Mr. Lerode, Muriel.

MURIEL. (*coldly*) Well, that's a pity, because I do. Good-night.

(*She holds out her hand, which JOHN takes in his: he bends over her, and speaks eagerly.*)

JOHN. Muriel, before you go—just one word. I'm relieved, of course, to find you only regard him—as a friend——

MURIEL. (*shrugging her shoulders*) What else?

JOHN. But *he*—is in love with you.

MURIEL. (*forcing a laugh*) What a mad idea!

JOHN. I could see it plainly enough, from the way he resented my being here, from the way he looked at you——

MURIEL. (*merrily*) Oh, John, John! My poor Iron King! Jealous, like an ordinary mortal! And, like an ordinary mortal, imagining all kinds of foolishness!

JOHN. Yes, Muriel, I'm jealous. (*with sudden passion*) I will not let this man come between us!

MURIEL. (*dryly*) If *that* is the way you intend to begin your courting, John, I can't promise you a happy ending. (*her voice becomes pleasant and playful again*) Now be sensible, do! And don't worry me any more to-night—I'm so tired! If it's fine to-morrow I'll call in at the Ritz, and fetch you to lunch. Perhaps, having turned over a new leaf, you *do* mean to lunch now?

JOHN. (*with deep earnestness*) I am at your service now and always. . . . Are you sitting to him to-morrow?

MURIEL. I was going to—but I've put him off,

as I thought you might want me. (*she goes to the door*) Good-night, Othello!

(*She kisses her hand lightly to him, and trips off.*

JOHN goes moodily to the table, takes a cigar, bites the end off, puts the cigar in his mouth, unlighted, and stands on the hearthrug, staring in front of him. The curtain slowly falls.)

CURTAIN.

ACT II.

JOHN GLAYDE'S *sitting-room in the Ritz Hotel. It is a large apartment, furnished in usual hotel style. Against the wall, on a pedestal, is a telephone; on a small side-table, covered with a white cloth, is a tray with breakfast-things untouched.*

JOHN *is sitting in front of a writing-table, on the top of which, beneath a glass paper-weight, is a pile of cables. He has both elbows on the flap of his desk, and rests his head on his hands.*

MICHAEL SHURMUR *bustles in from the door at back. He is a short, thickset man, wearing spectacles; his hair is very black and lank, and his complexion sallow in the extreme. He wears a thick irregular moustache, of which the ends are gnawn. JOHN turns his head slowly as SHURMUR comes in.*

SHURMUR. (*eagerly*) Well?

JOHN. (*languidly*) What?

SHURMUR. How about them cables?

JOHN. (*with a faint smile*) Those, Michael—those.

SHURMUR. (*lifting the paper-weight*) You've not looked at 'em!!

JOHN. No. Not yet.

SHURMUR. (*amazed*) Mercy on us! Then you don't know!

JOHN. (*fretfully*) Tut, tut, what is there to know? These things can wait. I'm not in the mood.

SHURMUR. (*wildly*) They kin wait, kin they?
J. J. Longman has given us the skip!

JOHN. (*starting to his feet*) What!!!

SHURMUR. He's gone over to Huggins—Mr. Peter L. Huggins, of Chicago.

JOHN. (*his hand nervously gripping the edge of the table*) Jack Longman!

SHURMUR. I always told you he was a rat. They say Huggins has made him a partner.

JOHN. My sister's son, whom I took in when he was a boy!

SHURMUR. (*grimly*) Well, he's took *you* in, that's all! Read Doherty's cable. (*he ferrets among the pile*) Huggins has got him. And I guess by this time he knows all about everything.

(*He hands the cable to JOHN.*)

JOHN. (*reading it, and muttering to himself*) Jack Longman! Jack!

SHURMUR. He'll have been reading about Judas belike—always fond of books, he was. What are you going to do?

JOHN. (*who has regained his self-control, phlegmatically*) Do? Nothing. (*he sits*) We've made our plans.

SHURMUR. Guess you'll have to alter them now. Longman'll be giving them tips!

JOHN. Bah—let him! They're running their heads against a brick wall, Michael.

SHURMUR. Shouldn't be surprised if they came away with a brick or two, though.

JOHN. (*shrugging his shoulders*) And then?

SHURMUR. All very well for you—but how about the others?

JOHN. What others?

SHURMUR. Them as has pinned their faith and their dollars to the name of John Glayde?

JOHN. (*frowning*) Ah!

SHURMUR. D' you know what they're saying in

New York to-day—what the headlines will be in the papers? John Glayde has stolen away—bolted to Europe!

JOHN. (*banging his fist on the table*) What! SHURMUR. D'you know what Consolidated Stock stands at? It was 102 when we left—last night it closed at 79.

JOHN. (*starting to his feet again*) 79!

SHURMUR. 79. That's the figure.

JOHN. (*feverishly*) It shall go back to-day, Michael! You're right—we must buckle to. Call up London on the telephone—by the Lord, I'll make that crew dance, over there! Call up London—get me on to Tresby—engage the line for me. Jack Longman! Huggins must have made the bribe pretty heavy—well, Huggins shall pay! Michael, all this has been only a little bit of a breeze so far—but there shall be a set-to, now, between Huggins and me, that Wall Street shall stare at!

SHURMUR. (*rubbing his hands*) Good!

JOHN. Huggins doesn't know I've been clearing out of things—Longman doesn't know—he'll be telling them all wrong. Michael, it's war now—till one of us falls—and then, by God, no mercy!

SHURMUR. We're out for blood, and we'll have it.

JOHN. We'll buy every Consolidated share that's offering—we'll buy, and buy. And we'll start an attack, right away, on every concern that Huggins controls. The London market shall have a shock to-day! It's a fight between Huggins and me—I don't care a snap for the others. By the Lord, he has tricked away Jack Longman, has he? Michael, the old man shall go on his knees for this—and eat dirt!

SHURMUR. Won't be the first time either—guess he knows the taste of it. (*he takes a cable form from the desk and sits*) I'll cable Doherty.

JOHN. No good cabling now—it's six o'clock in New York.

SHURMUR. (*writing*) If I know Patrick Doherty, he'll not have seen the inside of his bed last night. (*he looks up*) So J. J. Longman didn't know you had cleared out?

JOHN. (*haughtily*) Since when has it been my habit to let my clerks know what I am doing?

SHURMUR. (*with a chuckle*) Mister Longman'd have been tarnation sulky if I had called him a clerk!

JOHN. I made him, and I'll break him. What are you cabling?

SHURMUR. (*reads*) "John Glayde on top and going to roar." Guess that'll do?

(JOHN *nods*.)

SHURMUR. (*rising*) It'll give Doherty an appetite for his breakfast. (*his eyes fall on the tray*) You don't seem to have had any?

JOHN. (*shortly*) No. Have those things taken away.

SHURMUR. Right. (*he turns to the door*) I'll go and ring up London.

JOHN. (*with a sudden change of voice and manner, his anger dying away and a certain strange nervousness coming over him*) Have you nothing to tell me?

SHURMUR. (*over his shoulder*) You'll find it all in them cables.

JOHN. (*with an effort to make his voice unconcerned*) Is Mr. Lerode coming here?

SHURMUR. (*with a shade of embarrassment*) Yes.

JOHN. You went there?

SHURMUR. I did. He was in bed.

JOHN. What time is he coming?

SHURMUR. Didn't fix a time—said he'd look in this morning.

JOHN. What sort of place has he?

SHURMUR. What sort?

JOHN. Is he rich, or poor?

SHURMUR. Reckon he squanders his money—but he's got the money to squander. Pays his bills. Has a valet who thinks the world of him. Don't owe no money to his *conciérge*.

JOHN. I want Walters. (SHURMUR goes to the door leading to the bedroom and shouts "Walters!" then returns) Where does Mr. Lerode live?

SHURMUR. 26, Rue de Trévisé. Flat.

JOHN. Studio attached?

SHURMUR. Yes.

(WALTERS comes in: an elderly valet.)

SHURMUR. Boss wants you. And take away them things.

(He points to the breakfast-tray, and goes.)

JOHN. Walters, how many rooms have I here?

WALTERS. Hotel's very full, sir—I could only get one other sitting-room.

JOHN. Where's that?

WALTERS. (pointing to the right) Through there, sir. It's small, but will do for people to wait.

JOHN. Tell the manager I must have another—doesn't matter where it is. I'm expecting three people this morning—Lady Lerode, Mr. Lerode, and Mr. Collingham. I don't want them to meet. You understand?

WALTERS. Yes, sir.

JOHN. I'm in to no one else—no one—except, of course, Mrs. Glayde, who may be coming—but not till later.

WALTERS. Very well, sir.

JOHN. And I'm on no account to be disturbed.

WALTERS. I've told them that downstairs, sir.

(Dora bursts in from the door at back.)

DORA. (running to JOHN) Uncle!

(She flings her arms round his neck.)

JOHN. (A little coldly) Dora, my dear! (He

kisses her: then, sternly, to WALTERS) See to it, Walters.

WALTERS. (*deprecatingly*) I gave strict orders——

JOHN. Which have been disobeyed.

(*He makes a gesture. WALTERS goes, taking out the tray.*)

DORA. You're not angry with me, Uncle, for coming to see you?

JOHN. I'm very busy, my child. Lots to do this morning.

DORA. Well, you see—when I found you weren't at breakfast—and I only spoke to Auntie through the keyhole—she wasn't down—

JOHN. She's all right?

DORA. Her head's still bad, she said. Why, Uncle, *whatever* made you come here, instead of——

JOHN. Don't bother, Doffy. You know the flat isn't ready yet.

DORA. (*pouting*) I thought you'd be glad to see me—I did! I dragged that stupid old Fraulein here—and oh, the trouble I had before they'd let me come up!

JOHN. You should have sent in your name, dear.

DORA. *Then* it wouldn't have been a surprise! Uncle John, Uncle John, I want to speak to you, *very seriously*, about Mr. Collingham.

(*WALTERS comes in with a card.*)

JOHN. (*taking it*) Show him in. (*WALTERS goes*) Here is Mr. Collingham!

DORA. (*clapping her hands*) Oh!!! He has come—to speak about me!

JOHN. (*grimly*) I wonder.

DORA. And you mustn't think it's the money, Uncle—he doesn't care about money at all! He's an Oxford man—Oxford University—and he's been a War Correspondent—and he belongs to the Athe-

næum! That's a club in London, Uncle, that's full of Archbishops!

JOHN. (*smiling, in spite of himself*) Really?

DORA. And he has never made love—oh, never! In fact, it's the one thing I have against him—he *will* treat me as though I were a child! And I'm seventeen—I was seventeen last December—and that's six months ago. Don't *you* think I'm old enough, Uncle?

JOHN. But if *he* has never spoken about love?

DORA. (*emphatically*) Oh never, never!

JOHN. Then how do you know he loves you?

DORA. (*coquettishly*) It doesn't take a woman long, Uncle, to find out whether a man cares for her.

JOHN. (*with sudden, deep feeling*) Oh, you dear little fool! Why this terrible hurry to begin real life? Aren't you happy now? Haven't you all you want? O Dora, Dora, be a girl, and a little girl, as long as you can—you'll be a woman soon enough, and have to go through the mill! It will all come to you, Dora—don't be afraid—it will all come—but don't be in too great a hurry!

DORA. (*clinging to him, vaguely understanding*) Uncle, dear Uncle!

JOHN. (*releasing himself gently, and speaking in normal tones again*) That's all right—you see, at forty a man's a bit of a philosopher! However, don't be unhappy—I like Mr. Collingham.

DORA. Oh, I'm so glad! I——

(WALTERS comes in with COLLINGHAM.)

WALTERS. Mr. Collingham.

JOHN. Good-morning, Mr. Collingham.

(*They shake hands. JOHN motions WALTERS to wait.*)

COLLINGHAM. Good-morning, Mr. Glayde. Ah, Dora!

(*He shakes hands with her.*)

JOHN. Walters, you will take Miss Longman to her governess.

DORA. (*pouting*) Companion, Uncle.

JOHN. (*with a smile*) Very well—companion, then. Good-bye, my child.

(*He kisses her.*)

DORA. Are you coming to lunch, Uncle?

JOHN. If I can get away—I shall be very busy this morning.

DORA. Oh, *do* come! (*she turns to COLLINGHAM*) Good-bye, Mr. Collingham.

COLLINGHAM. Good-bye, Dora.

(*She goes with WALTERS.*)

COLLINGHAM. (*somewhat embarrassed*) Mr. Glayde, I feel myself in rather an awkward position—and scarcely know what you can think. Of course, I *am* fond of Dora—she is a very sweet child—but naturally she *is* only a child, and I'm fully aware—

JOHN. (*interrupting him, with a gesture*) Sit down, Mr. Collingham, sit down. . . . I fancy I know pretty well how matters stand between you two. And it's a thing we needn't discuss—need we? for a year or so. In the meantime we shall become better acquainted. The fact is, that when I asked you to come here, I wasn't really thinking of Dora at all.

(*He pauses.*)

COLLINGHAM. (*who has sat down, fidgetting*) Ah?

JOHN. I liked your face when I saw you last night—I liked you—and I wanted to ask you a favour.

COLLINGHAM. (*wondering*) Anything I can do—

JOHN. Will you smoke?

(*He offers him the cigarette-box.*)

COLLINGHAM. No, thanks.

JOHN. (*putting the box back on the table, and pacing the room*) I met you last night for the first time—I saw you for five minutes—I want to treat you as a friend, and be treated as a friend—by you. *he faces him suddenly*) Will you?

COLLINGHAM. It's an honour, Mr. Glayde, that I appreciate.

JOHN. Don't let's make phrases. *Are you my friend?*

COLLINGHAM. (*earnestly*) Yes.

JOHN. That's good, and settled. Now tell me about Mr. Lerode.

(*He sits facing COLLINGHAM.*)

COLLINGHAM. (*staring*) Lerode?

JOHN. (*quietly*) Yes.

COLLINGHAM. (*shifting uncomfortably in his chair*) I don't quite—

JOHN. I want to know what sort of man he is. He's a friend of yours?

COLLINGHAM. Yes—we were at school together.

JOHN. You like him?

COLLINGHAM. (*sturdily*) I do. He's a good fellow—and really a fine artist. Young, of course, with the—exuberance—of youth! The artist's temperament.

JOHN. (*dryly*) What's that?

COLLINGHAM. Oh—excitable, you know—enthusiastic—and so on.

JOHN. I see.

COLLINGHAM. But he's straight—oh, straight as a die!—one can trust his word, implicitly. A bit spoiled, but that's only natural. He lost his father early.

JOHN. What was his father?

COLLINGHAM. A fashionable West End physician, who got a knighthood for something or other. As for his mother—well, you saw her last night—

she's the ordinary type of frivolous society woman. In fact, she's a fool. It was a great blow to Trevor when she settled in Paris.

JOHN. (*grimly*) Not even your new Liberal Government will be able to abolish mothers. Go on.

COLLINGHAM. There's really no more to tell! He's wrapped up in his art, of course—he lives for his art—I've never known a man more single-minded, more passionately devoted——

JOHN. He sells his pictures?

COLLINGHAM. He's beginning to find a market—they think highly of him in Paris!—but he's capricious, and often refuses to sell.

JOHN. Why?

COLLINGHAM. He grows so fond of his things!

JOHN. He has money?

COLLINGHAM. A small income of his own, that his father left him. But not much.

JOHN. Mr. Branley is a friend of his?

COLLINGHAM. Oh yes—they're inseparable.

JOHN. Branley is also a friend of the Princess's?

COLLINGHAM. (*awkwardly*) Yes. . . .

JOHN. Merely a friend?

COLLINGHAM. (*half turning away, and shrugging his shoulders*) I never busy myself with floating gossip.

JOHN. The Prince seems a poor sort of creature?

COLLINGHAM. The usual kind of weedy aristocrat, who sells himself to an American heiress. (*quickly*) I beg your pardon!

JOHN. Not at all. Only please don't regard Mr. Huggins as the normal type of the American father. There is gossip about the Princess and Mr. Branley?

COLLINGHAM. This is an idle city, and people talk.

JOHN. (*incisively*) They talk about my wife, and Mr. Lerode?

COLLINGHAM. (*alarmed, half rising*) Mr. Glayde!

(JOHN stops him with a gesture, and waves him back to his chair.)

JOHN. You've seen Dora a good deal, I suppose, to have grown so fond of her?

COLLINGHAM. Your wife has been very kind to me—I've become almost an *habitué*—

JOHN. As I trust you will continue. Does Mr. Lerode live alone?

COLLINGHAM. (*puzzled*) I beg your pardon?

JOHN. Is it not the custom, in Paris, for artists to have an irregular *ménage*? We are always told so in novels.

COLLINGHAM. (*with a shrug*) Those novels are usually written by Kensington spinsters! Lerode is a man of a curiously refined temperament.

JOHN. In a word, you think a great deal of him?

COLLINGHAM. I do—yes—I like him. His mother has been trying to marry him to a Miss Hamblin—

JOHN. Ah! Who's she?

COLLINGHAM. The daughter of a wealthy English brewer, who has lately been raised to the peerage. She is studying art in Paris.

JOHN. Lady Lerode is trying, you say. Her son refuses?

COLLINGHAM. At least he is reluctant.

JOHN. Why? Is she ugly?

COLLINGHAM. A beautiful girl. And very much in love with him. But one of his reasons is—that she draws so badly!

JOHN. Not an insuperable objection. Is there no other?

COLLINGHAM. (*uncomfortably*) Lerode's not given to speaking much of his affairs.

JOHN. You've seen the portrait?

COLLINGHAM. Oh, yes. It will be fine!

JOHN. It's not finished?

COLLINGHAM. Not yet—no—not quite.

JOHN. Mr. Lerode requires many sittings?

COLLINGHAM. He really is quite a remarkable artist, you know.

JOHN. Yes. So you said. (*he rises—so does COLLINGHAM*) Well, Mr. Collingham, I'm exceedingly obliged to you. I appreciate your frankness, and your loyalty to your friend. I trust we shall see a good deal of each other.

COLLINGHAM. With all my heart! By the way, if you'd rather I didn't meet Dora——

JOHN. As often as you please!

COLLINGHAM. The fact is I promised to come to tea this afternoon——

JOHN. Do, by all means. I may be there, perhaps.

COLLINGHAM. Good-bye, Mr. Glayde.

JOHN. Good-bye, Mr. Collingham. And again—thank you.

(*They shake hands.* COLLINGHAM goes. WALTERS comes in.)

WALTERS. Lady Lerode is waiting, sir.

JOHN. (*pointing to the right.*) In there?

WALTERS. No, sir—they've given us another sitting-room round the corner.

JOHN. Bring her in. If Mr. Lerode should come while she's here——

WALTERS. Shall I take him to the next room, sir?

JOHN. No. The other one.

WALTERS. Very well, sir.

(*He goes. The telephone bell rings. JOHN goes to it, and puts the receiver to his ear.*)

JOHN. Hullo. You're Shurmur? Well? You can't get on to London? How many are waiting, do you say? Two ladies and a German? Let the ladies

have their turn—don't get excited, Michael—and buy the German gentleman off. Let him name his price, and pay it. Right. Good-bye.

(*He replaces the receiver on the hook, as WALTERS comes in with LADY LERODE.*)

WALTERS. Lady Lerode.

(*He goes.*)

LADY LERODE. My dear Mr. Glayde, how are you? Really, I'm quite in a flutter! I don't know *what* you can think!

JOHN. Won't you sit down? I'm sorry I kept you waiting.

LADY LERODE. (*sitting*) Not at all—though, really, if there had only been one of last year's illustrated papers on the table, I could have imagined myself at my dentist's. The same kind of nervousness!

JOHN. (*politely, as he sits, facing her*) Indeed?

LADY LERODE. (*impulsively*) Oh, Mr. Glayde, it *was* such a relief to see you like that, last night!

JOHN. Like what?

LADY LERODE. Oh, so strong, you know, and so sensible! I've said to myself, again and again, that cable of mine might have caused no end of mischief.

JOHN. The cable—yes. I have it here.

(*He takes out his pocket-book.*)

LADY LERODE. (*alarmed*) Heavens! you keep it in there! How rash!

JOHN. (*looking up at her*) Why?

LADY LERODE. If you left your pocket-book lying about!

JOHN. (*with a grim little smile*) I don't. (*he has taken out the cable, and reads it, very slowly*) "Lady Lerode's son painting Mrs. Glayde's portrait, strongly advise coming to Paris at once."

(*he looks up at her as he folds the cable and puts it back*) It's cryptic!

LADY LERODE. A shilling a word, you know—and they charged "at once" as two! So horribly expensive!

JOHN. (*patiently*) Very.

LADY LERODE. Well, now you're wondering *why* I cabled you.

JOHN. I am.

LADY LERODE. As I have said, you're magnificently sensible.

JOHN. Thank you.

LADY LERODE. You're a good deal older than Muriel, of course?

JOHN. Nine years.

LADY LERODE. (*with a gesture of surprise*) Only nine!—but I beg your pardon—how rude of me! Well, you see, I want Trevor to marry a Miss Hamblin—a girl who's wildly in love with him—

JOHN. (*politely*) Ah?

LADY LERODE. He *is* so handsome! And her father's a great brewer—or used to be—he turned his business into a company and it's doing very badly, but that's so lucky for him as he sold out and they made him a peer—he's enormously wealthy—

JOHN. These things happen in America, too, but we unfortunately have no peerage.

LADY LERODE. That's *such* a pity, isn't it? But you see how important it is! He has no son—only two daughters—so the girl is a splendid match.

JOHN. (*without a sign of impatience*) Quite.

LADY LERODE. And I had arranged it all—brought them together—preached common-sense to Trevor—oh, it wasn't easy, I can assure you!—and then he made friends with your wife—and that spoiled everything!

JOHN. Why?

LADY LERODE. Because Miss Hamblin—silly

girl!—became jealous! There's a German gentleman who lectured about Plato in London—I wish he'd come here! Plato should be a great success in Paris! But then, you see, Miss Hamblin's only twenty-two—the all-in-all period——

JOHN. What's that?

LADY LERODE. The age, don't you know, when a girl wants to feel that there isn't a corner in her lover's heart that's not papered with her photograph!

JOHN. Ah.

LADY LERODE. So naturally she resented——

(She pauses.)

JOHN. What? Does she think only women should paint women's portraits?

LADY LERODE. *(with a languid gesture, as she fans herself with her handkerchief)* You're not helping me at all, dear Mr. Glayde!

JOHN. I am trying to, Lady Lerode. Why *did* you cable for me?

LADY LERODE. I've told you. Miss Hamblin was jealous.

JOHN. And have I been dragged across the Atlantic to pacify a sentimental girl's jealousy?

LADY LERODE. You must have been a little jealous yourself, Mr. Glayde, or you wouldn't have come!

JOHN. I was coming, in any event. And—let me say to you, very simply—not a thousand cables—like this—would in the slightest degree disturb—the confidence I have in my wife.

LADY LERODE. *(triumphantly)* Of course! Very right and proper! *Quite* what I should have expected of you! Want of confidence—ridiculous! It's merely that Miss Hamblin——And that's why I complimented you on being so sensible. Because I knew *you* wouldn't think——

JOHN. I don't. And I didn't.

LADY LERODE. *(with a great sigh of relief)* Of

course not! Well, I *shouldn't* have cabled, I know. But I did—and you're here.

JOHN. (*looking quietly at her*) Yes, I'm here.

LADY LERODE. (*rising*) And there's no harm done, is there?

JOHN. I trust Miss Hamblin will be pleased.

LADY LERODE. The dear child has said to me again and again—if only Mr. Glayde would come!

JOHN. So that the dear child can now be reassured.

LADY LERODE. It will make her very happy—we shall all be very happy! (*she finishes buttoning her glove*) Would you like a word of advice?

JOHN. (*gravely*) I never refuse advice from persons of experience.

LADY LERODE. (*archly*) I wonder how you mean that! But (*she shakes a finger at him*) oh, Mr. Glayde, Mr. Glayde, you American husbands who devote all your time to making money, and neglect your wives, and let them go abroad alone, year after year! There are lots of 'em in Paris!

JOHN. So I've heard.

LADY LERODE. I assure you! And they're not all like Muriel—she's *such* a dear thing—I'm *ever* so fond of her! But—well, you know, it's not enough for a man to give his wife diamonds, and wonderful clothes—she wants to be told how she looks in them!

JOHN. You will be glad to hear, Lady Lerode, that I intend, in the future, to become a model husband.

LADY LERODE. (*clapping her hands*) Splendid! And—I can tell you—I wish you were mine! Good-bye! And so many thanks! No—please stay here—it's more prudent, I think, for me to go down alone, we might meet someone! Good-bye!

(*She goes, after shaking hands. JOHN stands for a moment, pensive: SHURMUR bursts breathlessly into the room.*)

SHURMUR. It's all right—we're next—we'll be on in ten minutes.

JOHN. Good. I can't telephone from here, I suppose?

SHURMUR. No. Trunk line's in the manager's office—you'll have to go down. Come now?

JOHN. No need for me to wait downstairs. You've engaged the line?

SHURMUR. Yes.

JOHN. You'll ring me up when it's free.

(WALTERS comes in with a card, which JOHN takes.)

JOHN. Show him in.

WALTERS. Yes, sir.

(He goes.)

SHURMUR. (*fidgetting*) Lerode?

JOHN. Yes.

SHURMUR. Hadn't you better let him wait till you—

JOHN. No. I shan't keep him long.

SHURMUR. You'll come at once when I ring?

JOHN. Of course.

SHURMUR. I had to pay that German fellow fifty dollars—he had the nerve to ask five hundred!

(WALTERS comes in with TREVOR.)

WALTERS. Mr. Lerode.

(He goes.)

JOHN. Good morning, Mr. Lerode. Please sit down. Leave us, Michael.

SHURMUR. You'll come?

JOHN. I've told you. (SHURMUR goes. TREVOR sits) Mr. Lerode, I am much obliged to you for your promptness. I trust I have not unduly disturbed you?

(TREVOR bows, but says nothing.)

JOHN. I will come straight to the point—I wish to speak to you about Mrs. Glayde's portrait.

(There is a moment's silence: TREVOR is looking fixedly at JOHN, waiting for him to continue; JOHN goes to his desk, sits, with his back to LERODE, and fishes for his cheque-book.)

JOHN. You are, I know, an artist of considerable distinction; and will, I am convinced, have produced a masterpiece. *(he has found his cheque-book, which he now spreads open before him, and dips his pen in the ink)* Kindly name the price.

TREVOR. *(blankly)* The price?

JOHN. Your own figure. *(he smiles)* I shall not haggle!

TREVOR. *(nervously)* The portrait is not finished, Mr. Glayde.

JOHN. *(turning slowly in his chair, and facing him)* It is finished, Mr. Lerode.

(For a moment they look steadily into each other's eyes, then JOHN swings himself back, dips his pen in the ink again, and resumes his pleasant, conversational tone.)

JOHN. And the price? *(TREVOR chokes, but says nothing)* You don't care, perhaps, to name a price? You prefer to leave it to me? Very well? *(he fills in a cheque, slowly and quietly, which he hands to TREVOR)* Here.

(TREVOR takes the cheque, then, his eyes fixed on JOHN, he very quietly tears it into small pieces, which he lets drop on the floor.)

JOHN. *(without the least trace of excitement, or emotion)* A trifle foolish, don't you think?

TREVOR. *(with manifest self-control)* The portrait was not a commission—it was I who asked Mrs. Glayde to do me the honour to sit to me. She was

good enough to consent. And, I have told you, it is unfinished.

JOHN. (*still in the same pleasant tones.*) I thought that I——

TREVOR. (*breaking in, harshly*) Therefore, in any event, the question of payment is not one that need at present be considered.

JOHN. (*quietly*) That, of course, will be as you wish. You prefer the portrait to remain your property—very well. Only—if, as you persist in assuring me, it is unfinished—what remains to be done must be done—from memory, Mr. Lerode.

TREVOR. (*fiercely*) Indeed?

JOHN. Yes. Mrs. Glayde will not go to your studio any more. And if, under the circumstances, you should carry your resentment so far as to refuse to visit her at the flat—I confess I shall consider you perfectly justified, Mr. Lerode.

TREVOR. (*with an effort at calmness*) Have you Mrs. Glayde's consent?

JOHN. (*blandly*) I beg your pardon?

TREVOR. It is Mrs. Glayde who is sitting to me, and not you. I ask, does Mrs. Glayde consent?

JOHN. That is a point, I fancy, into which we need scarcely enter.

TREVOR. (*defiantly*) There you will allow me to differ. What you have said has no weight with me. I take orders from Mrs. Glayde, and Mrs. Glayde alone.

(JOHN rises, and moves slowly towards him. The telephone bell rings; as he passes he takes the receiver from the hook and lays it on the top of the instrument; then goes to TREVOR, who has also risen, and waits unflinchingly.)

JOHN. (*with perfect calm*) I can quite understand, Mr. Lerode, that my request may appear somewhat unreasonable to you. But I am a good

many years your senior, and I consider it to be wise. Therefore——

TREVOR. (*interrupting violently*) I have never met you till yesterday—I don't know you—I have nothing to do with you. My friendship is with Mrs. Glayde.

JOHN. (*his voice for the first time becoming harsh and menacing*) That friendship has ceased to be. You disappear from her life.

TREVOR. (*with a jeer*) Indeed?

JOHN. I assure you. Because I wish it, and command it.

(TREVOR laughs out loud.)

JOHN. That strikes you as amusing?

TREVOR. Intensely! You have a great many millions, Mr. Glayde; I am not aware that they have bought your wife, and I promise you they cannot buy me.

JOHN. (*sternly*) Mr. Lerode——

TREVOR. (*breaking in again, bitterly*) We need not go into the question of how you made those millions, Mr. Glayde; you come from a country where robbery on a very large scale is known as high finance. But your money has no power over me. I do not give up a friendship I value at any man's bidding. Believe it!

JOHN. (*for a moment blinded by passion*) You fool!

(*The door bursts open, and SHURMUR rushes in wildly.*)

JOHN. (*angrily*) Michael!

SHURMUR. (*frantic with excitement*) Why don't you come—why didn't you answer? Tresby's at the line—he's waiting——

JOHN. Let him wait!

SHURMUR. There's a panic, I tell you—come, come at once—there's not a minute to lose!

JOHN. (*slowly, turning to him*) A panic?

SHURMUR. Smashes right and left—everything toppling—come!

(He pulls JOHN by the sleeve.)

JOHN. *(after a second's hesitation)* Mr. Le-rode, will you excuse me for a few minutes?

TREVOR. *(haughtily)* By all means.

JOHN. I offer you all my apologies. We will resume our conversation on my return.

(He goes, with SHURMUR. TREVOR shrugs his shoulders, and, with an ironic smile, watches his departure. Scarcely has the door at back closed when the door at the right opens slowly, and MURIEL'S head peeps in. Seeing that TREVOR is alone she rushes into the room, leaving the door open, flings her arms round his neck, and kisses him passionately. For a moment they stand locked in each other's embrace—then he breaks away nervously.)

TREVOR. Muriel! For Heaven's sake! If he—

(He looks anxiously round him.)

MURIEL. He's gone to his telephone. O Trevor! I heard your voice—I was waiting in there—

TREVOR. He wants me not to see you again!

MURIEL. *(feverishly)* Of course. Well, you mustn't. Tell him you won't!

TREVOR. *(aghast)* What! You consent!

MURIEL. Foolish boy! What else! Promise! Promise everything!

TREVOR. *(scarcely believing his ears)* Muriel!

MURIEL. When he comes back, be conciliatory—say that you'll do it! Have you forgotten that we're in France—that he could challenge you? And he's a dead shot—he'd kill you—

TREVOR. *(in despair)* Let him kill me! Do you think that I—

MURIEL. *(stopping him eagerly)* Hush! We must be quick. Listen. He suspects, of course,

but he doesn't know. How should he? He thinks it's friendship, and he's jealous. Well, promise!

TREVOR. (*completely bewildered*) I'm not to go to the house, or you to the studio—

MURIEL. (*more and more wildly*) Promise him, promise him! I tell you he'd kill you! He might kill you now—he carries a revolver always! I fooled him last night—well, it's your turn. He means to stay with me, he says, to devote himself to me. At six o'clock this evening I'll come to you, and we'll go off together.

TREVOR. (*mad with joy*) You will?

MURIEL. Yes—to our cottage at Mantes—they know us there—no one will suspect—we'll live there quietly—he never can find us! That's the safest place. Betsy shall lend us her car, and Chris shall drive us.

TREVOR. Can we be sure of Betsy?

MURIEL. She's spiteful, but true as steel. He can't find us at Mantes—how should he? no one shall know but we four. And we'll stay down there till he's tired of looking for me—he'll soon go back to his Trusts! And, Trevor, Trevor, we'll be together now, always! (*she throws her arms round him*)

TREVOR. (*embracing her passionately*) Always, Muriel! For the rest of our life!

(*They kiss each other. Suddenly TREVOR sees an arm reaching out from the inner room, and gently, slowly, closing the door. His jaw drops, he starts wildly; MURIEL's eyes follow his—their arms fall mechanically asunder; they stand, trembling with excitement. The door slowly closes.*)

TREVOR. (*in a dead whisper*) Someone closing the door! Who?

MURIEL. I don't know. Wait. Let us think. It'll be Walters—the valet.

TREVOR. He'll tell him we were together.

MURIEL. No—why should he? Besides, he's very deaf, and very stupid. And John doesn't question the servants. I'll go to him——

TREVOR. (*eagerly*) Yes—see whether he knows. . . . Or, listen—why not simply go back, and stay in there till I leave? Then——

MURIEL. You're right, you're right—I will.

TREVOR. You'd better go now. Say nothing to Walters—that's wisest. Perhaps someone else is in there?

MURIEL. I'll look. (*she goes to the door, opens it cautiously, and peeps in*) No—no one. I'll go. Trevor! At six o'clock! And remember—promise everything!

TREVOR. (*sorrowfully*) Oh, Muriel, it's so hateful, having to tell lies!

MURIEL. (*at his side again*) Do you want him to kill you? Trevor! You will?

TREVOR. (*slowly*) Yes.

MURIEL. (*taking his hand and kissing it*) Till to-night—and then always. Always!

(*She leaves him, at the door she kisses her lips to him; then goes into the inner room, and gently closes the door. TREVOR paces to and fro, nervously, looking at his watch, waiting. At last JOHN returns.*)

JOHN. Mr. Lerode, I am sorry to have had to leave you——

TREVOR. (*with an effort at courtesy*) It was as well, perhaps. I am afraid I was rather excited. . . .

JOHN. We both of us, I imagine, allowed our conversation—to drift from the point at issue. And now—what answer have you to give me?

TREVOR. (*slowly*) My visits—at Mrs. Glayde's flat—shall cease.

JOHN. (*with relief*) Ah! . . . And you will make no attempt to see her?

TREVOR. . . . I shall leave Paris to-night. . . .

JOHN. That is undoubtedly wise. Mr. Lerode, before you go—it is due to you—it is due us all—that I should tell you why—I have taken this step. . . .

TREVOR. (*going to the door*) It is unnecessary.

JOHN. (*stopping him with a gesture*) You are entitled to an explanation. My wife, like all women, has no idea that—while she is merely your friend—you . . . love her. . . .

TREVOR. I don't think we need say any more, Mr. Glayde.

(*He again turns to the door.*)

JOHN. As you wish. (*with a swift, sudden movement towards him*) I hope you are dealing straightforwardly with me—I hope it for your sake also!

TREVOR. (*turning full on him, and for a moment shaking with passion*) Mr. Glayde, Mr. Glayde!

JOHN. (*Coldly*) Well?

TREVOR. (*mastering himself*) Nothing.

(*He opens the door, and goes. JOHN remains standing for a moment, his eyes following TREVOR—then he rings. WALTERS comes in.*)

JOHN. When Mrs. Glayde comes—

WALTERS. (*rather puzzled, pointing to the inner room*) She must be waiting there now, sir. Shall I—

JOHN. Ah, she has come? All right, Walters. (*WALTERS goes; JOHN moves to the door and throws it open*) Muriel! Have you been waiting long?

MURIEL. (*coming into the room*) I've just come, John. Have I disturbed you?

JOHN. (*affectionately*) Not at all. How are you to-day? Is your head better?

MURIEL. Oh, much better, thanks—much! Are you coming to lunch, John?

JOHN. I'm afraid I must send off a few cables first—my friends on the other side are playing a merry little game with me. . . .

MURIEL. (*genuinely*) Oh, what a shame! Are they worrying you?

JOHN. It gives me a lot of work, that's all. But I fancy I'll keep my end up!—Muriel (*he takes her hand*), I've seen Mr. Lerode—he was here just now. . . .

MURIEL. (*affecting surprise*) Mr. Lerode! Then it *was* his voice!

JOHN. (*nodding*) Yes. I sent for him.

MURIEL. Why?

JOHN. (*very gently and deprecatingly*) Muriel, I don't want him to see you any more. . . .

MURIEL. (*laughing*) My dear John! Othello again!

JOHN. (*meekly*) Yes.

MURIEL. (*merrily*) Oh, you silly man! You've not made a scene?

JOHN. No—he's quite reasonable. . . . Oh, Muriel, can you do this for me? I've no right to ask it, perhaps. . . .

MURIEL. (*not unkindly*) You certainly haven't! And besides, the portrait's not finished. . . .

JOHN. (*drawing close to her*) I don't want the portrait—I want *you*!

MURIEL. (*with mild reproach*) Mustn't I have a friend?

JOHN. I'm on my knees to you, Muriel! Of course I know well enough that this friendship is only a—passing whim—but you *do* like him, Muriel—

MURIEL. (*pleasantly*) Oh, yes, I do—very much!

JOHN. And I'm horribly, frantically jealous! (*he drops his voice*) Because I—love you, love you!

MURIEL. (*moving slightly from him*) My dear John!

JOHN. (*taking her hand*) By the memory of those early days of ours——

MURIEL. (*stopping him playfully*) Tsch, tsch! (*she laughs, and gently withdraws her hand*) Well, I ought to be furious with you—I ought, indeed! Poor, inoffensive Mr. Lerode! And he consented?

JOHN. Yes.

MURIEL. Really! Agreed not to see me again! Mayn't he even call?

JOHN. I'd rather he didn't.

MURIEL. And he actually agreed?

JOHN. Yes.

MURIEL. Well, *his* friendship wasn't much to boast of! He might have held out a bit longer! Never ask me to sit for my portrait again—that's all! (*she rises*) Are you coming to lunch, John?

JOHN. (*looking at his watch*) It's only a quarter past twelve—I could be there in an hour. I *must* draft those cables. Muriel, Jack Longman has left me.

MURIEL. (*genuinely distressed*) Jack? Oh, surely not! Impossible!

JOHN. That has hit me rather hard—I loved the boy—there was nothing I wouldn't have done for him . . .

MURIEL. What *can* have induced him to——

JOHN. I suppose he thought advancement didn't come quickly enough—he's only twenty-four!—and Huggins, they say, has made him a partner. Don't tell Dora yet. We must break it to her. . . .

MURIEL. (*putting out her hand*) Oh, John, I *am* so sorry!

JOHN. (*taking her hand*) So be gentle with me! Forgive me!

MURIEL. (*pleasantly, letting her hand stay in his for a moment*) You really don't deserve it, you know! (*she moves from him a little*) Well—you'll be at the flat in an hour?

JOHN. Yes.

(*He makes a half-movement as though to embrace her—she evades him merrily.*)

MURIEL. I'll put lunch back, then. *Au revoir.*

JOHN. *Au revoir.* . . .

(*He goes with her to the door, which opens, and SHURMUR enters, with a big book under his arm.*)

MURIEL. Ah, Mr. Shurmur, how are you?

SHURMUR. Quite well, thank you, Mrs. Glayde.

(*They look at each other for the briefest part of a second, then MURIEL goes.*)

JOHN. (*following her with his eyes, then, with a half-sigh, turning to SHURMUR*) Is that the code-book, Michael?

SHURMUR. Yes. (*he sits at the desk*) You dictate first, and I'll translate after.

JOHN. Right. (*he sits*) Are you ready?

SHURMUR. Yes.

(*He has spread a large sheet of paper before him, and prepares to write.*)

JOHN. (*dictating*) "Buy all Consolidated shares offering till the market has reached top figures, also shares of all subsidiary companies——"

(*WALTERS has come in at the beginning of the dictation, and has stood unobserved: he coughs discreetly, to attract attention. He is carrying a small salver, with a card upon it.*)

JOHN. (*turning petulantly*) What is it?

WALTERS. (*going to him*) Beg pardon, sir, this gentleman has called again.

(*He holds out the salver, which JOHN waves aside.*)

JOHN. (*angrily*) I told you I would see no one.

WALTERS. (*deprecatingly*) Yes, sir—but it's for Mrs. Glayde—he came half-an-hour ago——

JOHN. (*turning from him*) Well, she's not here.

WALTERS. He wants to know her address, sir.

JOHN. (*dismissing him with a gesture*) I shall have to consult her first. Say so.

WALTERS. (*going*) Yes, sir.

JOHN (*calling him back*) Here, you had better give me the card. (WALTERS returns and hands him the card. JOHN takes it without looking at it) Mrs. Glayde hadn't come, of course, when he called before?

WALTERS. Yes, sir, but she was talking to Mr. Lerode.

JOHN. (*springing to his feet*) What!!!

WALTERS. (*startled*) Sir?

JOHN. (*wildly*) She was talking to Mr. Lerode?

WALTERS. (*sheepishly*) Yes, sir . . .

JOHN. How do you know?

WALTERS. (*frightened at his violence*) I went into the waiting-room, sir—the door was open—and I could hear them talking, sir.

JOHN. (*harshly*) Didn't you tell her this man had called?

WALTERS. (*more and more embarrassed*) No, sir . . .

JOHN. Why?

WALTERS. (*his eyes on the carpet*) Sir?

JOHN. I ask you, why didn't you tell her?

WALTERS. (*groping for words*) If you please, sir . . . I didn't think . . . Mrs. Glayde . . . would like to be . . . disturbed, sir. So I closed the door, and—

JOHN. (*interrupting him violently*) That will do. You can go.

(WALTERS goes, sheepishly. JOHN stands rigid, every muscle taut, his hand gripping the chair. There is silence. SHURMUR, who has watched

keenly through the whole scene with WALTERS, has his eyes fixed on JOHN, and sucks the top of his pen. Suddenly he turns to the desk again, and dips his pen in the ink.)

SHURMUR. (*in a matter-of-fact tone*) "Also shares of all subsidiary companies," was where we had got to.

JOHN. (*turning passionately on him*) You know?

SHURMUR. (*turning again, and eyeing him squarely*) Yes.

JOHN. How do you know?

SHURMUR. Everyone knows—they know at his studio—common talk——

JOHN. (*frantically*) What!!!

SHURMUR. No attempt at concealment——

JOHN. And you didn't tell me!

SHURMUR. (*after a moment's pause*) There is some things one man don't tell another.

(John drops into a chair, and covers his face with his hands.)

SHURMUR. (*turning to the desk again*) The cable——

JOHN. (*bitterly, with a groan*) The cable!

SHURMUR. (*quietly*) "John Glayde on top, and going to roar," was the message to Doherty.

(JOHN makes a mighty effort: he rises: the numbed muscles obey him, his hands unclasp: he tries, in a voice he cannot entirely control, a voice that does not seem his, to resume his dictation.)

JOHN. Also . . . shares of . . . all . . . subsidiary . . .

(He stops: he cannot go on. His head sinks on his chest, his eyes close: he stands motionless. There is silence. The curtain slowly falls.)

CURTAIN.

ACT III.

Scene as in Act I. The dining-table is shut up, the windows are open: it is a magnificent June afternoon, and the sun streams into the room.

MURIEL, COLLINGHAM, and MRS. RENNICK are seated: MURIEL on the sofa, palpably restless and distraite, and not listening to MRS. RENNICK, who is talking volubly.

MRS. RENNICK. Oh, yes—all the ancient Greek statues were coloured—that's why we really don't understand them, you know. And they say those we have are only cheap copies of the *real* masterpieces—the sort of things, you know, that the Greeks allowed their servants to dust! (*turning to MURIEL for a smile, she notices her inattention*) Muriel, dear, do I bore you?

MURIEL. (*recalled to herself*) Oh, Helen, of course not! It's *most* interesting!

MRS. RENNICK. You seem so absent, and restless. Has anything—

COLLINGHAM. (*who has noticed MURIEL's embarrassment, throwing himself valiantly into the breach*) Talking of servants, Mrs. Rennick, you remember that wonderful passage in which Xenophon describes the difficulty of getting good housemaids in Athens?

MRS. RENNICK. (*shaking a reproachful forefinger*) Mr. Collingham, Mr. Collingham!

COLLINGHAM. (*sententiously*) I met a man the other day—an oldish man—who told me that, in his youth, he had taken part in an expedition sent

out to Peru to search for two ancient wells, known as the springs of Life and Death.

MRS. RENNICK. (*throwing up her hands*) Now what *has* that to do with the use of colour in sculpture?

COLLINGHAM. (*blandly*) Irrelevance, dear Mrs. Rennick, is the fine flower of modern conversation. Don't you remember the Academicians of Laputa, with their wonderful word-machine? One may sometimes, by chance, happen to say something apt.

MRS. RENNICK. (*shifting in her chair*) This is the mood of yours, Mr. Collingham, that I like the least!

COLLINGHAM. One should be very tolerant with moods—they reflect the individual. And the question is constant—Am I my mood, or is my mood I?

MRS. RENNICK. (*turning to MURIEL*) Oh, Muriel, what *does* he mean? Muriel, you're wool-gathering again!

COLLINGHAM. I assure you, Mrs. Rennick, I have no meaning. I am simply turning the handle of the word-machine. Remember that I have to send a whole column every day to the "Courier"—and a column of sense!

MRS. RENNICK. (*laughing*) I hope so.

COLLINGHAM. You are pretending now that you don't read me?

MRS. RENNICK. I don't. I hate the papers.

COLLINGHAM. You are terribly modern, Mrs. Rennick—you care only for what is ancient. How you would devour the "Times" of Pompeii B. C.!

MRS. RENNICK. (*fervently*) Would I not!

COLLINGHAM. Have you ever met the re-incarnation crank? He is usually a very mild man, with silky hair, who neither drinks nor smokes. Tickle him, and he will confide to you what he was doing at the time that Salome danced before Herod.

MRS. RENNICK. (*bending forward*) It's a fascinating theme. I wish I could remember!

COLLINGHAM. You were probably Sappho—and your photograph was on picture-postcards. Or Aspasia—who can tell?—and had pleasant evenings with Pericles when he told his wife he was dining at the Club.

MRS. RENNICK. (*laughing*) And what were you?

COLLINGHAM. Mrs. Rennick, please tell no one—but I have a profound conviction that I was William the Conqueror—the date 1066 is so strongly impressed on my memory!

MRS. RENNICK. (*rising and giggling*) You are a goose! Muriel—(*MURIEL starts and rises*) Muriel, I'm afraid I can't stay—though I *should* so have liked to meet Mr. Glayde again. But you'll give me another chance, won't you?

MURIEL. (*shaking hands with her*) Of course—He has been fearfully busy to-day—a lot of cables to send.

MRS. RENNICK. Remember me to him. (*she turns to COLLINGHAM*) Ah, Mr. Collingham, you see I *do* admire Mr. Glayde, though he is modern! Good-bye. (*she shakes hands with him*) And next time we meet—*please*, be sensible.

(*She goes. MURIEL presses the bell, COLLINGHAM has held open the door. He returns.*)

MURIEL. (*sinking into a chair*) What a relief!

COLLINGHAM. (*sitting close to her*) I thought you were rather anxious that she should go.

MURIEL. She's a dear creature—but she got on my nerves to-day. How splendid you were!

COLLINGHAM. I turned on the nonsense-tap. Women hate nonsense almost as much as they do politics. (*with a sudden change of manner, his voice becoming friendly and solicitous*) What's the matter?

MURIEL. (*abruptly*) Nothing. Why?

COLLINGHAM. (*bowing*) I apologize—there's nothing the matter. Shall I go or stay?

MURIEL. Stay, please, till Betsy comes. (*with a glance at the clock*) She's late. . . .

COLLINGHAM. (*abruptly*) I saw Mr. Glayde this morning.

MURIEL. (*surprised*) You saw him?

COLLINGHAM. Yes: he told me to call.

MURIEL. (*uneasily*) Why? (*with a sigh of relief*) Ah, of course—about Dora!

COLLINGHAM. (*thoughtfully*) He doesn't seem especially to object to my being friends with Dora. He asked me a question or two about the portrait.

MURIEL. (*startled*) The portrait?

COLLINGHAM. And about Mr. Lerode. I think your husband's a splendid fellow, Mrs. Glayde. I like him tremendously.

MURIEL. (*indifferently*) I'm glad.

COLLINGHAM. (*fingering his gloves, and looking away from her*) Dora will never marry me, you know—she is merely trying her wings on me; it is my privilege to be No. 1 on the list. She flashes a smile on me, and records the effect: I am the preface to the book she will some day write on love.

MURIEL. (*carelessly*) You think that?

COLLINGHAM. (*nodding*) Yes. And do you know why I mention it to you?

MURIEL. I've no idea.

COLLINGHAM. Because I've a suspicion that Nature intended me for an uncle. One of my shoulders is a little higher than the other—evidently for women to hide their heads on it while they . . . tell me things . . .

MURIEL. (*wearily*) Dear Mr. Collingham, do you want to drive me away too? I'm like the rest of the women, you know: I don't care for nonsense.

COLLINGHAM. (*with sudden earnestness*) Well, then, I'll be very serious for a moment. I've seen the cloud that was no bigger than a man's hand

—I saw it this morning . . . I am very fond of you, Mrs. Glayde—I am your friend—

MURIEL. (*simply*) Thank you.

COLLINGHAM. (*looking intently at her*) I am John Glayde's friend, too, and John Glayde's a fine man . . . (*he pauses, then reverts to his light tone*) I wonder whether I hobnobbed with Socrates in my last incarnation but one? Anyhow I know this—that one must be wise to be happy.

MURIEL. (*impatiently*) You give that with the air of a discovery!

COLLINGHAM. It's one of those little truths that are like America, you know—which had been there all the time—but Columbus was a fairly old man when he discovered it. . . . And now I've said all I have to say. (*he rises*) I hear a piano. Can that be Dora?

MURIEL. They furnished two more rooms this morning.

COLLINGHAM. (*listening*) She's playing the Moonlight Sonata. How they love the moon when they're seventeen! At twenty-five, sunshine and Wagner—at forty, Chopin and candles.

(*The PRINCESS comes in.*)

COLLINGHAM. Ah, here's the Princess at last! I was just going to Dora to tell her that she's playing Beethoven as though it were Sousa. How is your Excellency to-day?

PRINCESS. My Excellency is well. And your Impertinence?

COLLINGHAM. (*with a bow*) Princess, when you think me impertinent, I am merely blatant modesty, masquerading!

(*He goes.*)

MURIEL. (*excited*) Betsy, Betsy, I've been in a fever, waiting for you!

PRINCESS. Sorry I couldn't come before—I was out. (*she sits*) What's up?

MURIEL. I want you to lend me your motor.

PRINCESS. Yours out of order?

MURIEL. (*at the Princess's side*) Betsy, I'm going off with Trevor to-night—

PRINCESS. (*with a jump*) What!

MURIEL. To the cottage we have at Mantes—we'll stop there till the excitement's over.

PRINCESS. (*staring*) Are you mad?

MURIEL. We've been to it twice for a couple of days—so the people won't think it strange our staying down there—they know us, you see. And with the exception of you and Chris there's not a soul who has heard of the place—not even Trevor's valet. So we shall be safe there—and he never can find us.

PRINCESS. He? Your husband?

MURIEL. (*nodding*) And let's be quick—he may come any moment. There's an At Home at the Embassy this afternoon—the card's on the mantelpiece—I'll tell him I'm going there—I'll stop the carriage at one of those houses with two doors, take a cab, and go on to Trevor's. You'll send your car, and Chris shall drive us to Mantes.

PRINCESS. (*throwing up her hands*) Mad as a hatter!

MURIEL. Perhaps—but that can't be helped. What else can I do?

PRINCESS. What else? Why anything but that! My child, that means ruin!

MURIEL. (*with a gesture of despair*) Oh, Betsy, for Heaven's sake don't preach!

PRINCESS. (*slowly*) Preaching's not exactly in my line—and I guess the wings would have to be sewn pretty tight on an archangel for them not to come off after living a week with my Prince. But it can't be done, Muriel, my girl.

MURIEL. (*fretfully*) Betsy!

PRINCESS. Can't be, can't be. What's the use of throwing your bonnet over the windmill? You won't catch it the other side.

MURIEL. (*with feverish eagerness*) Betsy, do

you understand? He came back last night—and he wants things to be as they were—and he talks of honeymoons!—He's jealous of Trevor . . .

PRINCESS. Don't blame him. Well?

MURIEL. He sent for him to-day—forbade him the house—

PRINCESS. Shows he's only jealous, and don't know anything.

MURIEL. He'll soon find out.

PRINCESS. Husbands never do.

MURIEL. He has that man Shurmur with him—and Shurmur knows—I could see that by the way he looked at me. And he'll tell John—if he hasn't told him already. And I'm frightened—he said he'd come to lunch—

PRINCESS. And didn't he?

MURIEL. No—he telephoned through he'd be very late.

PRINCESS. Did he give any reason?

MURIEL. It was Shurmur telephoned.

PRINCESS. (*shaking her head*) H'm . . . But see here—John Glayde's a very square man—he has neglected you all these years—

MURIEL. (*feverishly*) He'd forgive me, perhaps, but he'd kill Trevor.

PRINCESS. It's only in French plays that they kill lovers.

MURIEL. (*wringing her hands*) Betsy, don't! Can't you see what I am feeling? At least don't make fun of it!

PRINCESS. (*stolidly*) I'm not making fun. There'll be no killing if you give up Trevor.

MURIEL. (*wildly*) Give him up?

PRINCESS. Why not?

MURIEL. Because I love him, and can't live without him—can't live.

PRINCESS. Trevor's all right, but he don't hold a candle to John.

MURIEL. I love him,

PRINCESS. He's younger than you.

MURIEL. Three years.

PRINCESS. Three years is a lot. And he's a painter, you know—he raves about your soul, but it's your face he looks at.

MURIEL. I know, I know! You needn't tell me that it won't last for ever!

PRINCESS. For ever! Say eighteen months.

MURIEL. (*putting her hands to her ears*) Don't, Betsy, don't! It may be true—it will be, perhaps—I can't help that—I love him!

PRINCESS. You used to love John.

MURIEL. If he hadn't left me—if I'd had a child, or hadn't met Trevor—Well, it's too late for that, now. He'd kill him!

PRINCESS. I tell you he wouldn't! Give up Trevor!

MURIEL. (*staring angrily at her*) Betsy!

PRINCESS. Yes—give him up! Not morals, my dear—I'm not a moralist, worse luck—wish I were! But—

MURIEL. (*with feverish determination*) The car must be at Trevor's studio at six.

PRINCESS. (*quietly*) It shall be, of course, if you wish it. But you won't.

MURIEL. (*her hands to her head*) Oh, you'll drive me frantic!

PRINCESS. Take a week to consider.

MURIEL. A week! And what would happen, do you think, in that week?

PRINCESS. The sun would rise every morning, and set every evening. And you'd alter your mind.

MURIEL. I had to lie to him yesterday—I had to lie to-day, and shall have to again, I suppose. . . . Lies, lies, I've been living in lies! No!—I'll make an end. He's proud—he'll just fold his arms, and say nothing—

PRINCESS. He's not a man to talk much—but what will he do?

MURIEL. He won't be able to find us, if he should try.

PRINCESS. There's Shurmur.

MURIEL. I tell you no one can trace us down there! It's safer than trying to get on board a steamer. And besides, Trevor can work.

PRINCESS. And you—what will you do? There are weeks, and then years——

MURIEL. I? Never mind about me. I'm done for!

PRINCESS. (*throwing up her hands*) And to think of the lots of people there are in the world, who imagine we're awfully happy, because we're rich!

MURIEL. (*with a sigh*) Yes. . . .

PRINCESS. (*with sudden energy*) Muriel, just sit tight for two minutes, and let me talk. My father married me off to a scoundrel, a blackguard, a beast—well, I'm what they've made me. *You* married for love——

MURIEL. That's long ago—and he killed it!

PRINCESS. He has come back to you—give him a chance!

MURIEL. (*fretfully*) Betsy!

PRINCESS. He deserves it all—he has no right to reproach you—he has brought it on himself. And I tell you you'll find him big—he'll not beat his bosom, or squeal. Make a clean breast of it, Muriel—just go and tell him the truth. Let Trevor go back to his paint-pots, and you hunk off to Egypt with John.

MURIEL. (*doggedly*) I love Trevor.

PRINCESS. Trevor's a boy, and will change.

MURIEL. I love him.

PRINCESS. John's a good fellow—I wish *I* had married him! I'd have run straight as a die!

MURIEL. (*with a wail*) Oh, don't you see? Have you no pity? He *is* a good fellow—no one knows *how* good he is! And he's cut to the heart

to-day, because his nephew has left him—Jack Longman, you know, Dora's brother. And he's sick, and he's sorry—and when he told me this morning I'd have liked to throw my arms round his neck——

PRINCESS. Why didn't you?

MURIEL. Because I love Trevor—and he must come first—before everyone! I can't reason, or argue—I love him! Oh, Betsy, don't say any more! You mean well, and I'm grateful. The time will come, I dare say, when I'll wish I had listened to you!

PRINCESS. It will.

MURIEL. But—I can't give him up!

(*A moment's silence—the PRINCESS, with a shrug, gives up her attempt to persuade.*)

PRINCESS. At what time do you want the car?

MURIEL. At six—at the studio.

PRINCESS. (*with deep feeling*) You're the one woman I care for—the one friend I have——

MURIEL. (*with an instinctive movement towards her*) Betsy!

PRINCESS. And I see you, with your eyes open, making a hash of things, and I can't stop you. It's hard luck!

MURIEL. (*with a look at the clock*) Is he coming at all, I wonder? It's nearly five. I must go and get ready, in case. . . . You'll wait?

PRINCESS. If you like.

MURIEL. If he comes while you're here, find out whether he knows.

PRINCESS. What's the use? Besides, I shan't be able to stop very long, if I'm to see about the car.

MURIEL. No, that's so. Well, good-bye, Betsy!

(*She kisses her.*)

PRINCESS. I'll come down to Mantes.

MURIEL. Don't—you might be followed—Shur-mur'll try everything. Good-bye.

(*She kisses her again.*)

PRINCESS. O Muriel—think!

MURIEL. (*shaking her head*) It's no good, Betsy—I must!

(*She goes. BETSY stands, with an unhappy look on her face. After a moment, a footman enters with BRANLEY.*)

FOOTMAN. Mr. Branley.

(*He goes.*)

BRANLEY. (*very excited*) Ah, Betsy! I thought I might find you here. I've just left Trevor. You've heard?

BETSY. (*dryly*) Yes.

BRANLEY. A nice state of things! Glayde called twice at the studio, before Trevor came in——

PRINCESS. Oh! That's bad. . . . And Trevor's as crazy as she, I suppose?

BRANLEY. I've argued, and prayed—it's no use.

PRINCESS. Same here. Well, you'd better not wait—John Glayde may come any moment—and I'm not at all sure that he thinks very highly of you.

BRANLEY. (*puffing himself out*) Preposterous!

BETSY. (*eyeing him contemplatively*) Not sure that I do, either. Well, you're to drive them to-night, and bring back the car——

BRANLEY. A mercy that Trevor was out, when Glayde called—wasn't it?

PRINCESS. (*dryly*) I wonder!

BRANLEY. (*amazed*) Betsy!

PRINCESS. (*impatiently*) Go, go. I'll look in myself at the studio, later. Don't wait.

BRANLEY. (*protesting*) Really, Betsy!——

PRINCESS. (*coldly*) I've told you to go.

(*BRANLEY shrugs his shoulders, and goes. In the corridor his voice is heard, off, as he says "How d'you do" to JOHN GLAYDE, whom he meets. JOHN comes into the room, alone. His*

face is white and haggard, but he betrays no sign of emotion.

JOHN. Ah, Princess! (*they shake hands*)
Where's Muriel?

PRINCESS. She's gone to change her dress—
there's an At Home at the Embassy this afternoon.

JOHN. (*carelessly*) Ah.

PRINCESS. (*with an effort at flippancy*) Not
been ruining my Poppa, have you?

JOHN. (*sternly*) Don't let's talk about him.

PRINCESS. Why?

JOHN. He has got hold of a nephew of mine—a
boy I was fond of.

PRINCESS. Oh, it's *he* who has done that!
Muriel told me—I didn't know it was Poppa.

JOHN. Yes.

PRINCESS. (*earnestly*) Well, I'm sorry. I wish
it hadn't been Poppa. Don't seem quite square,
somehow. I'm real sorry, Mr. Glayde.

JOHN. I was fond of the boy.

PRINCESS. Muriel told me—she was quite cut
up.

JOHN. (*lifting his eyes to her*) She was?

PRINCESS. Quite.

JOHN. (*dropping his eyes again*) Ah.

(*There is silence; the PRINCESS fidgets, and goes to him.*)

PRINCESS. Well, I'll leave you—I've lots to do.

(*She holds out her hand.*)

JOHN. (*taking it, with a keen look at her*)
You've known Muriel a long time?

PRINCESS. Ten years, off and on.

JOHN. You've been her friend?

PRINCESS. I have. Why?

JOHN. (*dropping her hand*) Oh, nothing! I've
been out of her life so long—I scarcely know who
her friends are.

PRINCESS. (*with a touch of anger*) Yes—you've been out of her life—you've stuck your nose to the grindstone, and merely gone for making money. Like my Poppa.

JOHN. Yes.

PRINCESS. My mother died when I was ten. I've seen quite a deal of Poppa—when he was ill. But that wasn't often.

JOHN. It's a rotten system.

PRINCESS. (*with sudden impulsiveness*) John Glayde, be very kind to Muriel!

JOHN. (*looking up again, with some surprise*) I mean to. Why do you tell me?

PRINCESS. (*embarrassed*) I don't know—it just bubbled up. You've been very cruel.

JOHN. How?

PRINCESS. (*stamping her foot*) How? You cared more for money than you did for your wife.

JOHN. (*quietly*) That's not so.

PRINCESS. We women don't analyze motives, and things—we go hard for facts. She's been in Paris six months—you wrote four times!

JOHN. I was busy.

PRINCESS. Yes—that's the cry of the American husband. Oh, it makes me tired!

JOHN. One can't undo the past.

PRINCESS. No . . . Well, be very kind to her . . . (*impulsively*) Are you going with her to the Embassy this evening?

JOHN. I've not been asked.

PRINCESS. As though John Glayde needed an invitation! Good-bye.

(*She holds out her hand again.*)

JOHN (*taking it, and for an instant holding it in his*) Good-bye, Princess. (*with a keen glance*) Is there anything you want to tell me?

PRINCESS. (*forcing a laugh*) Gracious, what

should there be! . . . I'm real sorry about your nephew. Good-bye.

JOHN. Good-bye.

(*As she goes, DORA and COLLINGHAM come in, talking and laughing.*)

PRINCESS. Ah, Dora (*she pats her cheek*), I'm just off—good-bye. Good-bye, Mr. Collingham. I'd think twice before I married him, Dora—he's very cheeky.

(*She goes.*)

DORA. (*running to JOHN, who has sat down, and throwing her arms round his neck*) Oh, Uncle John, how tired you look!

JOHN. Yes, I'm tired. And it has been so close to-day. How are you, Mr. Collingham?

(*He nods to him.*)

COLLINGHAM. (*with an anxious look at JOHN*) One of those uncomfortable days when the air seems to have been filtered through hot flannel!

DORA. They've furnished two more rooms—you'll stay with us now, Uncle, won't you?

JOHN. We'll see. Dora, dear, run and tell your Aunt I'm here.

DORA. Yes, Uncle John.

(*She kisses him and goes. There is silence. JOHN has his eyes fixed on the ground. COLLINGHAM is uncomfortable and restless. JOHN suddenly raises his eyes and looks at COLLINGHAM.*)

JOHN. Did you tell Mrs. Glayde of my talk with you?

COLLINGHAM. (*after a second's pause, sturdily*) Yes.

JOHN. Why?

COLLINGHAM. I'm quite a good friend of hers. And I didn't think you'd blame me.

JOHN. I don't. (*he drums his fingers on the*

table) You weren't very frank with me this morning?

COLLINGHAM. (*uneasily*) I don't understand . . .

JOHN. (*bitterly*) I have money enough to buy cities—there are things one cannot purchase!

COLLINGHAM. (*eagerly*) Don't forget what I told you about the idle gossip in Paris . . .

JOHN. You're a good fellow, Collingham.

(*He stretches out his left hand, without looking at him.*)

COLLINGHAM. (*taking it*) Good-bye, Mr. Glayde.

JOHN. Good-bye. Give me your card—I may need you. (COLLINGHAM takes a card out of his case, and gives it to him) You'll be in to-night?

COLLINGHAM. (*hesitating*) Yes—but——

JOHN. (*with a gesture*) Good-bye.

(COLLINGHAM goes, with bent head. JOHN remains in his chair, his hands hanging limply down. DORA comes running back.)

DORA. She'll be here in a minute, Uncle John—and she *does* look so lovely!—Why—where's Mr. Collingham?

JOHN. He's gone.

DORA. Gone! You've not quarrelled?

JOHN. Quarrelled! No. I like him.

DORA. (*eagerly*) I'm so glad! Uncle John, I can't tell you how good he is! He never says an unkind thing about any one, and he won't let me. He——(MURIEL has come in—DORA hears the rustle of MURIEL's dress, and turns.) Oh, there's Auntie!

(*She jumps up and runs to MURIEL, who stands nervously at the door. She is splendidly gowned: her arms are bare to the elbow, the dress is cut rather low at the neck. In her hand she carries*

long, white gloves, that she unconsciously is twisting. JOHN does not stir, or look at her.)

DORA. (*prancing around her*) Oh, what a splendid dress! Auntie, I'll have a dress like that next year—mayn't I?

JOHN. (*with a half-turn towards DORA*) Leave us, Dora.

DORA. (*pouting*) Uncle! Must I?

JOHN. Yes.

(DORA goes, a little petulantly. There is constrained silence till the door closes; then MURIEL moves slowly towards him, and speaks, with manifest effort to keep her voice natural.)

MURIEL. You're fearfully late, John—you couldn't come sooner, I suppose? (*he doesn't turn or look at her; his head is bent, and his eyes fixed on the ground*) You've sent off your cables? . . . I've this tiresome affair at the Embassy . . .

JOHN. (*still without looking at her, in a low, broken voice*) I . . . know, Muriel . . .

MURIEL. (*starting*) What do you mean?

JOHN. I . . . know . . .

MURIEL. (*forcing a laugh*) You know what? John, this is absurd!

(*He slowly raises his eyes and looks at her. She mechanically retreats a step, but preserves her cheerful tone.*)

MURIEL. That silly Walters will have told you that I was talking to Mr. Lerode?

JOHN. (*slowly*) Yes . . .

MURIEL. (*laughing again*) And you imagine from that—

JOHN. No, not only from that . . .

MURIEL. You surely don't think—

JOHN. (*springing to his feet, in an outburst of*

wild passion, and seizing her by the wrist) I tell you I know!

(They look into each other's eyes for a second; he releases her: she totters back, sinks on to the sofa, and buries her face in her hands.)

JOHN. *(the whirlwind of passion dying away, his voice becoming dull and mechanical, as he stares vaguely at her)* Don't cry—what's the use? I'm to blame, more than you . . . I left you to pick up dollars in the gutter . . . Well, I've got them—and lost you . . .

(She lies crouched in a heap, an occasional sob breaking from her; he still stares dully at her.)

JOHN. I stand alone, with my millions stinking around me. . . . Don't cry. . . . You couldn't tell that I loved you—that you were all I had. . . . It's not your fault. . . . I did nothing but work—it grew like a cancer. I was John Glayde, the Iron King, who endowed hospitals and universities—John Glayde, the great man whose name was in all men's mouths—John Glayde, the miserable fool, who has thrown away—you!

(She stirs restlessly—half raises herself as though to speak, then lets herself fall heavily back again, and sobs afresh. Her emotion is genuine, in face of his great sorrow.)

JOHN. *(with sudden passion)* And now, if he could tear his flesh, or lop off an arm—barter the years he has left for a week with you—sell all the world, trade his money, his future, his brain, to hear you tell him you loved him. . . . *(he beats his clenched fists against his forehead)* Madman, madman!

MURIEL. *(appealing, through her sobs)* John!

JOHN. She cabled me, the woman, his mother—

MURIEL. *(catching her breath)* What!

JOHN. And I threw everything up and sailed. Would you believe it? I had never had a suspicion. We don't take out our lungs to see whether they are breathing—you were in there (*he raps his fist against his heart*)—in me, part of me. . . . Then came the cable. . . . And the week on the steamer. . . . Pacing the deck, to and fro—people there, to whom I must talk, and smile. . . . “Painting Mrs. Glayde's portrait, come at once—come at once—come at once.” . . . And the boat crawling along, and the sea all around me. . . . And I saw him painting, and looking at you. . . . I saw you there with him, smiling into his eyes, telling him that you loved him—(*in a paroxysm of fury*) By God, he shall pay!

MURIEL. (*springing to her feet, and, in her excitement and fear, laying a hand on his arm*) What will you do to him?

JOHN. (*furiously*) What will I do, to this painter who seduces his sitters—what will I do? (*she shrinks from him, and trembles, but never takes her eyes off him*) Don't be afraid—I shan't harm you. I suppose women are like that. It was *my* fault that you no longer loved me.

MURIEL. (*desperately, with sudden resolve*) That's not true.

JOHN. (*staring at her*) What do you say?

MURIEL. (*breathless*) Not true—no. Will you listen—will you hear?

JOHN. Go on.

MURIEL. Before you came—long before—it was all over—all.

JOHN. What!!!

MURIEL. (*feverishly*) A moment of madness—I was alone, I was lonely—how could I tell that you cared for me? You never wrote, I never saw you. . . . Yesterday, when you came in, what do you think my one fear was, my one desire? That you never should know. . . . So to-day I went in

and told him—told him I never would see him again—that you were here now, were going to stay with me—that you would protect me——

JOHN. Muriel!

MURIEL. (*dropping her voice*) You spoke of our honeymoon yesterday, you spoke of our early days—there was I with this load upon me, with my crime. . . . Between him and me all has long been over. . . . But I had to go on with the portrait—had to receive him, or people would talk. . . . (*slowly*) You came back, and spoke of our honeymoon—did you think I had forgotten?

JOHN. (*dazed*) Muriel—Muriel, Muriel! Is this true?

MURIEL. (*going close to him*) Look at me—look—look into my eyes—and see whether I'm speaking the truth!

(JOHN stares at her, scarcely believing his ears—she meets his gaze unflinchingly, almost with a smile; and then, with her eyes on his, she slowly draws him to her as she puts her arms round his neck. He shudders at first; at the touch of her flesh on his he yields, and sinks his head on her shoulder.)

MURIEL. (*one hand close to the head that lies on her shoulder*) Can you forgive me? More than forgive—blot it out? I'll go away with you—Italy, anywhere—we'll be together. Leave the hotel—stay here. . . . John, shall it be?

JOHN. (*raising his head*) Yes . . .

MURIEL. You will forgive me?

JOHN. Yes . . .

MURIEL. And shall we forget, and begin all over again?

JOHN. (*wildly and passionately*) Yes! Yes! Yes!

(He tries to take her in his arms—she evades him, with a warning forefinger.)

MURIEL. (*with a glance at the clock*) It is half-past five—I must go to the Embassy——

JOHN. (*eagerly*) No, no!

MURIEL. (*for a second contracting her eyebrows*) I must. For an hour—that's all——

JOHN. (*fondly*) I'll go with you . . .

MURIEL. No, no, I'll go alone. I'll tell you why. . . . When I come back we shall meet as we used to meet—forget this horrible thing, never speak of it again——

JOHN. (*clinging to her*) It is forgotten, Muriel! Don't go—stay with me! I can't let you leave me—now!

MURIEL. (*slowly, picking her words*) I want to go out, be with people—come back, find you here—you, my husband, my (*she puts both hands to his head, swings it to her, and kisses him full on the lips*)—my lover! . . . Shall I not go?

JOHN. (*intoxicated, in a whisper*) Yes, Muriel, yes! . . . But come soon!

MURIEL. (*solemn in her triumph*) In an hour. And you'll remain here—you'll not stir from this place?

JOHN. I shall be here, counting the minutes, till you return.

(*She takes his head again with both hands, and solemnly, possibly for the first time with a feeling of remorse, she kisses him on the brow.*)

MURIEL. Good-bye!

(*She goes. JOHN follows her with his eyes; as the door closes, he sits, lets his hands fall by his side, and waits. DORA puts her head in at the other door and trips into the room.*)

DORA. (*running to him*) Well, Uncle, have you been nice to her? You've not scolded?

JOHN. (*stroking her hair*) No, Doffy—no. . . . Dora, I've some bad news for you . . .

DORA. (*alarmed*) Uncle!

JOHN. About your brother.

DORA. (*clinging to him*) He's not dead?

JOHN. No, no—he's well, he's quite well. But he has gone from me, Dora—left me—

DORA. (*amazed*) Left you! why?

JOHN. To make more money, I suppose, or make it more quickly. Mr. Huggins of Chicago—an enemy of mine—offered him a partnership, and Jack has gone.

DORA. (*in despair*) Oh, how wicked! After all you've done—for him, and me!

JOHN. (*gently*) The way of the world, Doffy! And I'm not sure that he has been—in a very good school . . . He has seen too much cutting of throats among us—we've none been over-nice, or over-scrupulous. It's a blow to me, Doffy—but I've no right to complain.

DORA. (*crying*) And will you still . . . keep me with you, Uncle?

JOHN. (*drawing her tenderly towards him*) My poor little girl! You can't help your brother leaving me! And besides—I've brought it on myself—I know that. If he wants to come back to me, he shall. I'll forgive him . . . too . . .

DORA. (*burying her head on his shoulder*) Uncle, dear Uncle! . . .

JOHN. (*looking straight before him, as he mechanically strokes her hair*) I've played with edged tools, and mustn't complain if one of them cuts me. I've thought myself very wise all these years—cared too much for this wretched money and the power it brought me—I didn't see that I was digging up my own happiness, building myself a great pedestal, on which I'd have to stand—alone. But at least I've found it out in time, before it was too late; and I'm going to make a change. And Jack, poor foolish Jack, who has hit me so hard—Jack shall find that I bear him no grudge, that I take it as my punish-

ment, Doffy . . . for I deserve to be punished . . . but I mean to do better in future . . .

(She vaguely realizes the sorrow in his voice, and throws her arms round him. For a second he holds her close to him; then SHURMUR rushes wildly into the room.)

SHURMUR. *(breathless)* Why did you let her go?

JOHN. *(starting to his feet)* Michael!

SHURMUR. *(pouring out his words)* She stopped the carriage at a shop fifty yards away—went right through, took a cab, and gave his address——

JOHN. *(staggering)* What!!!

SHURMUR. His address! Yes, I tell you—yes!

JOHN. *(with a roar of mad anger, seizing SHURMUR by the shoulders and shaking him in his agitation)* Michael Shurmur, Michael Shurmur!

DORA. *(running to him)* Uncle!

(Without looking at her he seizes his hat and rushes wildly from the room. DORA turns, crying, to SHURMUR who is about to follow him.)

DORA. *(wringing her hands)* Oh, Mr. Shurmur, what has happened?

CURTAIN.

ACT IV.

TREVOR LERODE'S studio. *To the left is a door opening on to a paved way, on each side of which are laurel-trees in buckets. At the end of this way is an iron gate, flanked by a low stone wall; beyond is a fairly broad road, with houses on the other side. In the studio there is a long, high window at back, looking on to the garden, which is neglected, with rank grass growing, but there are a few trees in full bloom. To the right is a door leading to another room, through which the garden can be reached. The studio has an arched roof, culminating in a top-light. The floor is stained, and covered sparsely with a few rugs. There is a sitter's platform, two or three easels, and some highbacked, antique chairs. On the wall are three or four foils, and a couple of fencers' masks. The aspect of the place is distinctly severe—it is pre-eminently a worker's studio—and there are no fal-lals or fripperies.*

As the curtain rises CHRISTOPHER BRANLEY is seated in a great armchair, puffing at his pipe, his legs stretched out before him. TREVOR, in his shirt-sleeves, is kneeling on the ground, strapping canvases.

BRANLEY. And how about clothes?

TREVOR. *(looking up for an instant, but going on strapping)* Clothes?

BRANLEY. You'll want some, won't you? That bag all you're taking?

TREVOR. Yes. Got a few down there. Besides, there are shops. (*he finishes strapping the roll of canvas, and puts it beside the other, a very long one*) The question is, how many of these can I get into the car?

BRANLEY. (*puffing at his cigarette*) Don't see how you're going to get that long one in. The landalette's coming.

TREVOR. (*angrily*) The landalette! Why not the big yellow car?

BRANLEY. So that all Paris can see you driving off with her?

TREVOR. (*grumbling*) We might have had the hood up.

BRANLEY. And attract attention all round! People don't muffle themselves up on a hot day in June.

TREVOR. (*laying his hand on the long canvas roll*) I must take this canvas somehow.

BRANLEY. It's the Venus?

TREVOR. Of course. What else?

BRANLEY. Well, there's not room for her and Muriel. Have to leave one of 'em behind.

TREVOR. (*angrily*) Chris!

BRANLEY. Besides, how about the model?

TREVOR. She can come down to me there.

BRANLEY. Then you'd have John Glayde six hours after.

TREVOR. Why?

BRANLEY. If that flutter-brained little Nini goes to you at Mantes, all Montmartre will know about it in the evening.

TREVOR. (*regretfully*) That's so, of course. Come to think of it, I may as well leave the canvas here. I'll never get another model like Nini. I shan't be able to go on with it.

BRANLEY. (*puffing out rings of smoke*) Nor with anything else, as far as I can see.

TREVOR. (*turning fiercely on him*) Why the devil do you keep on saying that?

BRANLEY. (*stolidly*) Because I'm your friend.

TREVOR. To hell with your friendship, if that's the advice you give me! (BRANLEY *shrugs his shoulders*. TREVOR *hands him three small boxes of pastels, and a strap*) Just strap up these pastels, will you?

BRANLEY. (*taking them, laying down his pipe, and speaking as he straps the boxes*) Yes—pastels are the thing. Still life, flowers—sketches of the cat purring at the window—

TREVOR. What are you driving at now?

BRANLEY. (*still strapping*) You forget that I ran away with a married woman once.

TREVOR. (*with a sneer*) Only once?

BRANLEY. Jupiter, catch me doing it again! When she wasn't making me tell her that I loved her, she was crying because of the other fellow she had left.

TREVOR. (*angrily*) D'you think Muriel's that sort?

BRANLEY. Every woman is. Wasn't I glad when No. 1 turned up!

TREVOR. You would be.

BRANLEY. We were so well hidden that he couldn't find us. I sent him an anonymous letter.

TREVOR. (*putting away one roll of canvases, and trying the straps of the other*) Brute!

BRANLEY. (*laying down the boxes of pastels*) Well, I don't know. He took Madame home, and we exchanged shots at twenty-four paces. I did the correct thing—I fired in the air.

TREVOR. (*viciously, as he pulls at a strap*) I wish he had killed you!

BRANLEY. (*with a chuckle*) Thank you. He might have, you know—he had never handled a pistol before.

TREVOR. (*suddenly facing him*) Don't you

understand, you ridiculous idiot, that I love Muriel?

BRANLEY. (*placidly*) I've heard you say it often enough.

TREVOR. Say it, and mean it! She's the——

BRANLEY. (*breaking in, waving his hand*) I know, I know. Of course she is—no one's denying it. So was mine, so are they all. And if you'll only give up painting, you'll be perfectly happy.

TREVOR. (*fiercely*) Have you gone off your head? Why should I give up painting?

BRANLEY. You work from the nude mostly, don't you? Do you think she'll ever let a nude model pose to you?

TREVOR. (*scornfully*) Do I think! You don't know her!

BRANLEY. (*waving his pipe*) You wait and see! It'll be cats at the window, flowers, and studies of old men. Oh, take it easy! There's something to be done with those.

TREVOR. I'll get a new model down there, and start the Venus over again.

BRANLEY. Yes—a dairymaid, with flat feet and a turned-up nose.

TREVOR. (*turning angrily to him*) Look here, will you understand one thing? If I had to choose, this moment, between my art and Muriel, do you think I'd hesitate?

BRANLEY. No, I don't. If you had to choose, this moment, you'd choose Muriel.

TREVOR. Very well, then—leave me alone!—Have you strapped those pastels?

BRANLEY. (*picking up the boxes and handing them to him*) The queer thing about painting is that one never gets tired of it.

TREVOR. (*who has taken the pastels and laid them by the side of the canvases*) You're not a man at all—you're a mere machine that eats and drinks——

(*He takes his coat from the chair, fetches a clothes-brush, and brushes it.*)

BRANLEY. And has sense.

TREVOR. (*brushing the coat*) Glayde will divorce her.

BRANLEY. Probably.

TREVOR. And we'll get married—and I'll work as I used to—come back to Paris——

BRANLEY. You've very little of your father's money left.

TREVOR. My pictures sell.

BRANLEY. Because you've been indifferent whether they did, or not. You've never known what it meant to pot-boil.

TREVOR. (*throwing the clothes-brush violently to the ground, and striding towards him*) I've had enough of this—do you hear—and more than enough! Stop this silly cackle of yours, with your croaking and mumbling! And I tell you this—if there is to be suffering, I'd rather I bore it than she. If I *have* to give up my art, and take to pot-boiling, I'll do it without a murmur, for *her* sake!

BRANLEY. (*with half-closed eyes, as he puffs at his pipe*) Now.

TREVOR. Now and always!

BRANLEY. (*sitting up*) To-morrow's a beastly word. Anything else I can do?

TREVOR. (*passionately*) Yes—be damned to you—damned, damned! Why have you been saying these horrible things? You know what my work means to me——

BRANLEY. That's just it.

TREVOR. And you imagine that she—that she—oh, Chris, I tell you, it'll take me a long time to forget this!

BRANLEY. (*placidly*) We'll hope I'm wrong.

TREVOR. Wrong! If you knew anything of women——

BRANLEY. All that I've said to you to-day you'll say to yourself by-and-by.

TREVOR. Never, I tell you—never!

BRANLEY. Oh, not aloud, of course. Well, I've finished. (*he gets up and stretches himself*) I've done what I could. . . . I'll see about letting the studio. Perhaps I'll take it myself.

TREVOR. (*sulkily*) I'd rather have someone else. More chance of getting some rent.

BRANLEY. (*cheerfully*) There's something in that. I'll forward your letters.

TREVOR. Don't, till you hear from me. I'll send an address.

BRANLEY. Why? If you get no letters there, they'll think it strange.

TREVOR. That's so. Don't forget, though, that I'm Mr. Matthews.

BRANLEY. Oh, I shan't forget!

(*A knock. TREVOR slips into his coat, runs to the door, and opens it. The PRINCESS is there—she comes into the room.*)

TREVOR. Princess!

PRINCESS. (*quietly*) Yes. Finished your packing?

TREVOR. I'm quite ready. (*he looks at his watch*) She'll be here directly.

PRINCESS. Yes. (*she sits*) Unless——

(*She pauses.*)

TREVOR. Unless what?

PRINCESS. Unless John Glayde stopped her. I suggested his going with her to the Embassy.

TREVOR. You did!

PRINCESS. I did. Oh, without giving her away, of course! I merely nudged Providence.

TREVOR. (*very white*) I thought you were our friend?

PRINCESS. Hers more than yours, Trevor. I'd like to say one last word to you——

TREVOR. (*writhing*) Oh, for Heaven's sake! He has been going at me, the past hour!

PRINCESS. (*quietly*) When Muriel comes—if she comes—send her home.

TREVOR. (*fiercely*) Are you mad? Let her go back to *him*?

PRINCESS. He's worth twenty of you.

TREVOR. She loves me.

PRINCESS. You're three years younger than she—and three years is a lot. You're twenty-eight, and she's thirty-one. She'll be jealous—you'll fret—you'll both be unhappy—but it'll all fall on her. Send her back, Trevor! John Glayde has forgiven. . . .

TREVOR. (*stamping his foot*) Princess!

PRINCESS. (*calmly*) Not my business, of course, but I like her. And there's something that hurts when a woman you like goes on telling lie upon lie. And it shows that it's not her real self—*she* wouldn't do it. Fact is, she's mad, just now. Afraid he'd kill you—that's at the root of it. And we women are fearful fools when we think we're in love. It's up to you, Trevor. Save her!

TREVOR. (*tearing his hair*) Save her! From what?

PRINCESS. From herself—the bad self that's been lying. Give her time to remember!

TREVOR. It's *you* who are mad!

PRINCESS. She thinks that she loves you now—but there's something in her that will always belong to John Glayde.

TREVOR. I love Muriel—do you understand that?—love her with all my soul!

PRINCESS. Then prove it—give her a chance.

TREVOR. I love her—and nothing shall part us!

(*The PRINCESS shrugs her shoulders, rises, and moves away. BRANLEY, who has been at the window, gives an exclamation and turns to TREVOR.*)

BRANLEY. Your mother's coming! She's getting out of her carriage!

TREVOR. (*wildly*) My mother!

BRANLEY. Yes.

TREVOR. Heaven! And Muriel here in a minute! Princess!

(*He turns appealingly to her.*)

PRINCESS. Yes?

TREVOR. Will you slip out through that door—you can get into the garden through the dining-room—bring Muriel in that way.

(*LADY LERODE has passed up the paved way, and gives a sharp knock.*)

PRINCESS. If she comes!

TREVOR. Of course she'll come! Will you?

PRINCESS. Yes.

(*She moves to the door.*)

TREVOR. As soon as she's here I'll take my mother off—and come back at once. Tell her—

(*Another, and a sharper, knock.*)

PRINCESS. I will. But I hope—

(*She goes.*)

TREVOR. Chris, stand at the window, and let me know—

BRANLEY. All right.

(*TREVOR goes quickly to the door and opens it. LADY LERODE bounces in. She is very excited.*)

LADY LERODE. Trevor! Trevor! Can this be true?

TREVOR. (*coldly*) What?

LADY LERODE. (*seeing BRANLEY*) Ah, Mr. Branley! Mr. Branley, I'm glad you're here! Can you conceive it?

BRANLEY. Conceive what, Lady Lerode?

(*He has gone to the window, and stands with his back half turned to LADY LERODE.*)

LADY LERODE. (*dropping into a chair, which TREVOR has placed for her so that her back is to the window*) I've just come from the Hamblins. Imagine it! He saw the girl this afternoon, and told her——

(*The outer gate clangs. TREVOR looks at BRANLEY, who nods.*)

TREVOR. She came here—I put an end to the farce—that's all.

(*The PRINCESS, who has in the meanwhile gone into the garden through the inner door, is seen to pass with MURIEL, but both keep close to the outer wall.*)

LADY LERODE. (*throwing up her hands*) Farce!

TREVOR. What else? (*he takes his hat*) Mother, I have to go out.

LADY LERODE. Now?

TREVOR. Yes—I've an appointment.

LADY LERODE. (*looking around*) You've been packing?

TREVOR. I'm off to the country for a bit.

LADY LERODE. Mr. Branley, you're an old friend of his——

TREVOR. (*impatiently*) Come, mother—we'll talk in the carriage—you shall drive me——

LADY LERODE. (*not stirring*) The poor child is absolutely ill—hysterical. How could you!

TREVOR. I told her the truth, that's all. I hadn't seen her for weeks—she came this afternoon—it's time that she knew. Come!

(*He taps her impatiently on the shoulder.*)

LADY LERODE. It's inconceivable! And we all rejoicing at Mr. Glayde's arrival! (*with a sudden idea*) Ah! *That's* why you are going away!

TREVOR. If you like. (*he throws open the door*) Come!

LADY LERODE. (*turning to BRANLEY*) Mr. Branley! Help me!

(BRANLEY *shrugs his shoulders.*)

TREVOR. Mother, I have to catch a train. If you don't come I'll go without you.

(*He pulls her by the sleeve.*)

LADY LERODE. (*to BRANLEY*) Can you imagine anything so ridiculous? Mr. Glayde's in Paris, and he tells the girl he doesn't love her!

TREVOR. (*almost dragging her out*) Come!

LADY LERODE. (*turning protestingly to him*) My dear Trevor—

TREVOR. You can tell me all the rest in the carriage!

(*He has got her out, and closes the door. They pass down the paved way, and the outer gate clangs. The other door slowly opens, and MURIEL and the PRINCESS come into the room. MURIEL is wearing a long cloak over her dress.*)

MURIEL. (*to BRANLEY*) Will he be long?

BRANLEY. Oh no—a few minutes.

MURIEL. (*taking off the cloak, which she throws on a chair*) The car's there—Mr. Branley, will you send the chauffeur home? He didn't see me, fortunately. But I don't want him to wait.

BRANLEY. (*going to the door*) All right.

MURIEL. And don't you think it would be better—if you went off in the car yourself, perhaps, and came back in ten minutes? Then he wouldn't suspect.

BRANLEY. (*nodding*) That's a good idea. I will.

(*He goes, leaving the door open. MURIEL sinks into a chair.*)

PRINCESS. (*standing before her*) Well?

MURIEL. (*putting both hands in front of her*)

face) Don't look at me, Betsy. I'm horrible! I've done fearful things!

PRINCESS. What?

MURIEL. He wanted to come with me—I had to —(*she shakes her head, with a gesture of despair*) Oh, terrible, terrible!

PRINCESS. What did you do?

MURIEL. Don't ask me—I've been abominable—vile. But it was my one chance—I had to seize it—I had to! But oh, how I loathe myself!

PRINCESS. It's not too late now—there still——

(*As she speaks the door is pushed open, and JOHN appears on the threshold. BETSY sees him, stops short in the middle of her sentence and stares at him. MURIEL lifts her eyes and screams.*)

PRINCESS. Mr. Glayde!

JOHN. (*coming slowly into the room, his eyes fixed on MURIEL*) Leave us!

PRINCESS (*wringing her hands, in terror*) Mr. Glayde, Mr. Glayde!

JOHN. (*without looking at her*) Go!

PRINCESS. I can't—I won't!

MURIEL. (*rising slowly to her feet*) Go, Betsy.

(*After a moment's hesitation, looking from one to the other, the PRINCESS goes, with bent head, dragging her feet, and closes the door. Her footsteps are heard on the paved way, the clang of the gate. Not till then does JOHN move—he walks slowly to MURIEL, till he almost touches her. He has never taken his eyes from her, nor she from him, from the moment he entered the room. She breathes quickly, but does not flinch.*)

JOHN. You lied to me?

MURIEL. (*steadily*) Yes.

JOHN. Why?

MURIEL. To save him.

JOHN. From what?

MURIEL. From you.

JOHN. And you put your arms round my neck, and kissed me?

MURIEL. Yes.

JOHN. That you might go alone, and come here?

MURIEL. Yes.

(There is a moment's silence, as they stand face to face, looking into each other's eyes.)

MURIEL. *(with a sudden cry)* You have your revolver. Kill me!

JOHN. *(shaking his head)* No . . . You were going off together?

MURIEL. *(her voice again becoming almost mechanical, as though she were hypnotised)* Yes.

JOHN. Where?

MURIEL. To a cottage we have at Mantes.

JOHN. This was all arranged?

MURIEL. Yes.

JOHN. When?

MURIEL. This morning, when I spoke to him.

JOHN. So it has all been lies, and lies, and lies?

MURIEL. *(almost fiercely, almost triumphantly)*
All! All! All!

(There is a moment's silence—then she bursts out passionately.)

MURIEL. What was I to do! you would have killed him!

JOHN. Will you come back with me now?

MURIEL. *(defiantly)* No, I will not.

JOHN. You shall have your own house—live apart—

MURIEL. No. I hate you!

JOHN. Why?

MURIEL. Because you have come between us, with your strength and your cruelty! You have forced me to this—made me do these terrible things—

JOHN. *(steadily)* You will come back with me.

MURIEL. I will not—I will not!

JOHN. You were all I had in the world. Very

well, that is over. I am thinking now only of you.

MURIEL. Then leave me!

JOHN. To him?

MURIEL. Yes. The man I love!

JOHN. No. That is asking too much.

MURIEL. (*with a half-movement towards the door*) I am going with him.

(*Intercepting her, in a sudden mad fit of fury, he seizes her wrist.*)

JOHN. Traitor and liar!

MURIEL. (*again with an almost savage note of triumph*) Yes.

JOHN. You could put your arms round my neck, and look into my eyes—

MURIEL. To save the man I loved.

JOHN. And you imagine that now I will let you go off with him?

MURIEL. I will never go back with you!

(*He releases her wrist, her arm falls by her side. There is silence, as they stand, breathing quickly, face to face. He passes his hand over his forehead, masters himself, then speaks slowly and quietly.*)

JOHN. I want to save you. I won't talk of disgrace, or shame—you seem dead to these things. I want to save you. I used to love you—I had faith in you—great faith. All I said to you—every word I have said—was true. I have not lied to you—I do not lie now. This afternoon—I believed. I looked into your eyes, and believed you. You said things to me—I believed them all. You need not have done this. It was unnecessary.

MURIEL. I did it to get away.

JOHN. You did it to get away. *How* you must hate me!

MURIEL. When you try to keep me from him.

JOHN. And all those years, when you lay in my

arms, gone and forgotten! "My husband, my lover . . ." You should not have done this.

MURIEL. I had no time to think.

JOHN. As you see, I am very calm. I am not using big words, or threatening. I don't talk to you of myself, of what I am feeling. I want to save you, that's all. I cannot believe that you, the woman I have known all these years, would have done what you did this afternoon, unless—

MURIEL. (*breaking in, desperately*) I would do it again—for him. I am not ashamed—I love him.

JOHN. There are limits to human endurance. Don't say that again. Where is he?

MURIEL. His mother came—he took her home. He'll be here very soon.

JOHN. You refuse to come with me?

MURIEL. (*doggedly*) Yes: I refuse.

JOHN. Then it lies between him and me.

MURIEL. (*in sudden panic*) What will you do to him?

JOHN. Since you will not come—

MURIEL. No! I will not!

JOHN. I must save you, at any cost.

MURIEL. (*passionately*) Save me! From what! From the one chance of happiness I have in the world! Go back to your Trusts, to your money! Go to your office, and scheme, and plan—break men's hearts and ruin their lives! What have we been to each other, for years! In my loneliness I have found a man who loves me—I love, and am loved!

JOHN. A love that can make you do what you did to-day is a horrible love.

MURIEL. At least it is love! I shall go with him.

JOHN. That is your last word?

MURIEL. (*defiantly*) Yes!

JOHN. Very well then—let us wait.

MURIEL. (*with a shriek*) You mean to kill him!

JOHN. (*coldly*) Why not?

MURIEL. (*frantic*) Why not, why not? Be-

cause I adore him—you hear that, adore him! Belong to him, body and soul!

JOHN. (*with a great cry, writhing, broken in two*) Oh! Have you no pity!

(*She turns, and stares stupidly at him. He has dropped his head—she looks round as though dazed. The silence is broken by the sound of wheels, a cab that stops, the clang of the gate, then footsteps on the paved way. Neither of them speaks or stirs. TREVOR opens the door with his latch-key, and starts violently at seeing JOHN.*)

TREVOR. Mr. Glayde!

JOHN. (*slowly raising his eyes*) Come here.

MURIEL. (*with a shriek, but not moving*) Trevor, he will kill you!

JOHN. (*quietly*) Come.

(*TREVOR has thrown a quick glance at the foils on the wall—but moves slowly across the room to JOHN.*

JOHN. (*in dead, calm tones*) This woman loves you. She used to be my wife. She loves you beyond everything else—honesty, truth, shame. She has made the greatest of all sacrifices for you—she has lied and betrayed . . . Take her away.

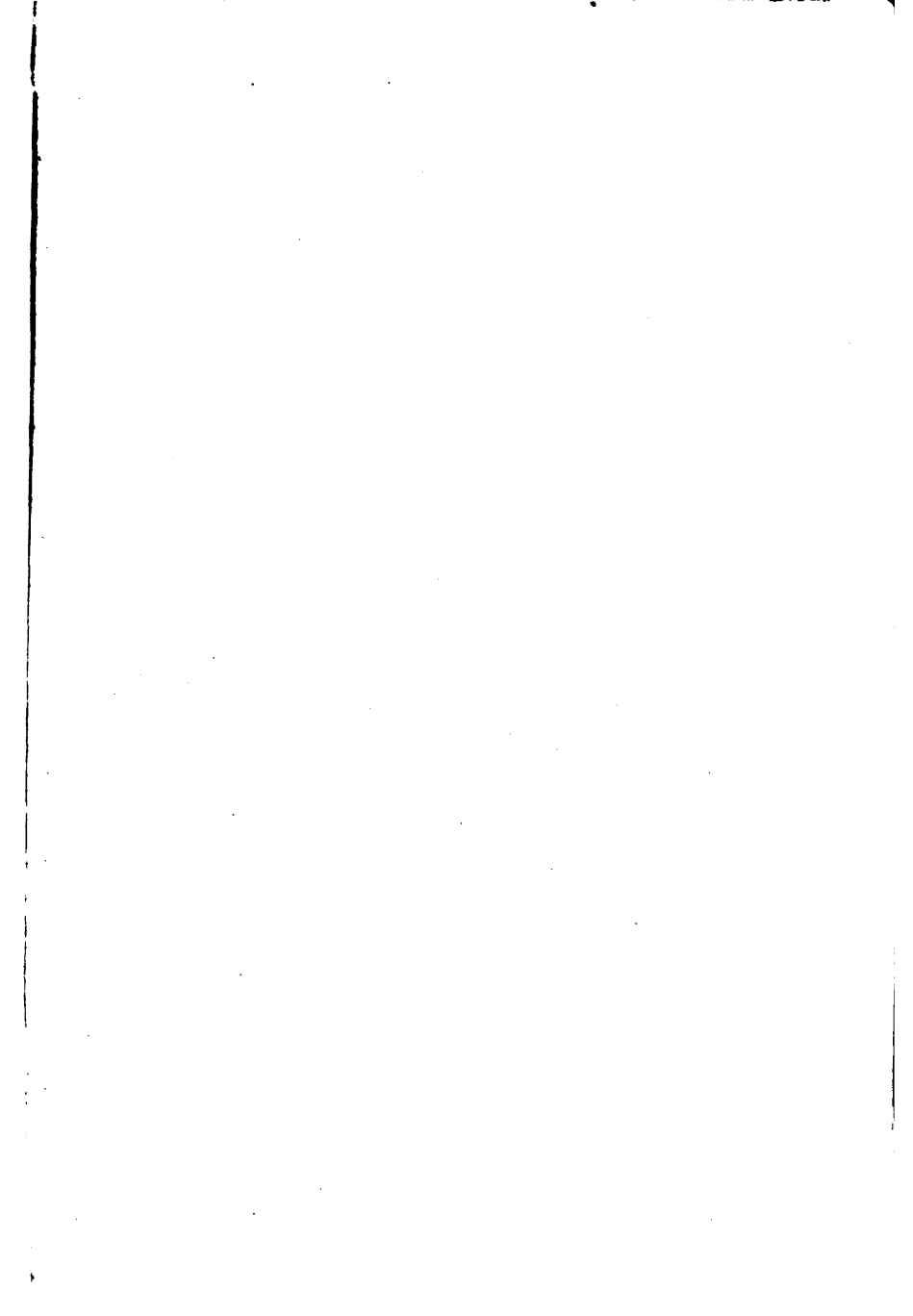
MURIEL. (*the nervous tension breaking, with a sudden, muffled cry, staggering against the wall*) John!

JOHN. I shall divorce her—you can get married. I shall make provision for her, that she never may want. Take her, and help her—to lie and betray no more.

(*MURIEL covers her face with her hands. TREVOR stands tongue-tied, bewildered. Without looking at her, without looking at him, JOHN GLAYDE moves slowly to the door, and goes. His steps are heard on the stone outside, then the clang of the gate; neither of the two stirs. The curtain slowly falls.*)



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MEMBERS OF THE
COMMISSION ON THE
STATUS OF WOMEN
IN THE UNITED STATES



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